

# Muslims between East and West

A study of identity and the use of *hijab* among  
Bosnian Muslim women in Sarajevo



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Master degree thesis in History of Religion  
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December 2008



## Executive summary

The overall focus of this thesis is the relationship between Europe and Islam and what it implies to be a European Muslim. I have interviewed Muslim women in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, focusing on their Muslim identity and the use of *hijab* (the Muslim headscarf). The aim was to find out how the women construct their identity when they belong to both Europe and the Muslim cultural tradition and how the European and Bosnian context influences on their understanding of Islam. As expected, what it means to be a Muslim woman in Bosnia varies, and I have designed four categories to describe this plurality of Muslim identities, whereof the categories “Bosnian Islam” and “global Islam” apply to my informants. Those who identify with “Bosnian Islam” stress their Bosniak identity and European cultural belonging, while those in favour of “global Islam” orient towards the global Muslim community, the *umma*. The women in the first category think it is inevitable and positive that the Bosnian/European context influences on their Islamic practice, the “*umma*-Muslims” think society’s influence on Islam should be as little as possible. The main focus is on the women’s choice whether to wear *hijab* or not, and how they regard this custom. The fact that many Muslim women in Europe wear *hijab* remains controversial among non-Muslim Europeans, who mostly consider this custom to be a negative feature of patriarchal culture. This thesis presents the opinions of Bosnian Muslim women (who are native Europeans) regarding this much-debated issue. The majority of Muslim women in Bosnia do not wear *hijab*. My selection of informants consists of both women with and without *hijab*, and one woman with *niqab* (facial veil). The women who wear *hijab* combine their headgear with either modern or conservative clothing, depending on what they consider appropriate. Through their clothes my informants express their understanding of Islam and what is involved for them to be Muslim women. Moreover, the wearing of *hijab* is closely linked to religiosity, self-identity and a Muslim collective identity. However, there is not just one Muslim collective; through their clothing the women can express identification with different Muslim orientations. For a comparative perspective I relate my informants to immigrated Swedish Muslim women. To highlight the different meanings my informants attach to the wearing of *hijab* I discuss how they relate to important Islamic feminine virtues such as modesty and decency. The wearing of *hijab* can also be understood as a courageous act of devout women who are willing to face stigmatisation in order to please God.





## ***Acknowledgements***

Many people have helped me, directly or indirectly, to accomplish my Master degree thesis in History of religion. First of all I would like to thank the women in Sarajevo who found time for me in their busy schedules and were willing to share their thoughts and opinions with me, a total stranger. Without them this piece of work would never have been possible. I am deeply grateful for the generosity and kindness they have showed me.

I am very much indebted to my tutor at the University of Oslo, Professor Anne Stensvold. With her enthusiasm on behalf of my project she has been a great source of inspiration, and she has also provided me with a lot of constructive criticism and advice. She never seemed to loose faith in me (even though the writing process stretched out over a long period of time), but remained patient and supportive until the end.

I would also like to thank Christian Moe, who was so kind to offer to read my thesis right before I handed it in. With his profound knowledge about Bosnian Islam he was able to offer me some really useful comments. I also benefited from his eye for details.

I am extremely grateful to Stein Robert Høvik, who used his excellent English skills to improve my language. He made a tremendous effort in the last weeks before I handed in my thesis. I could not have made it without him. I would also like to thank him for being there for me when I needed someone to cheer me up.

The friends I made in Sarajevo, who all made me feel very welcome and helped me at different stages of my stay, truly deserve my gratitude: Ivana and Snežana Despotović, Mersudin (Merso) and Mirsada Herac, and Berina Karahasanović, for treating me with the acknowledged Balkan hospitality and for being my friends. A special thank to Mirsada for her wonderful home-cooked food. I would also like to thank Ljiljana (I still can't pronounce your name right), my language-teacher, and her son Jagi who helped me to find accommodations and showed me around town when I first arrived in August 2005.

Huge thanks go to my family, especially my mother Mai-Britt Faarlund and my sister Camilla Faarlund Øksenvåg, for encouraging me and being very supportive. My mother and my father, John Henry Øksenvåg, have always supported me and believed in me whatever I have set my mind to do, and for that I am very grateful. Camilla, who read my thesis chapter for chapter during the last months and gave me useful inputs, deserves a lot of gratitude. So does Stein Roar Fredriksen, her boyfriend, who helped me with the layout.

Last but not least I would like to thank Ingrid Standal Kvalsvik, who has been the best flatmate I could have wished for. Because we were both working on our master degree theses, she has been a huge support mentally.

I was lucky to receive a scholarship from the “Religion and nationalism in the Western Balkans” project, a research project at IKOS directed by my tutor, Professor Anne Stensvold.

Needless to say: even though many people have contributed to this thesis, only I am responsible for the final version and all possible mistakes and shortcoming.

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Oslo, December 2008

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## **Preface**

To come to the decision to write my thesis about Bosnian Muslim women was a durable process. I have for a long time been interested in Islam and have included available courses on Islam in my University degree. I have to admit that part of my interest was based on fascination, the kind of fascination you have towards phenomena that you don't understand and consider opposite to everything familiar. Especially the Muslim headscarf, *hijab*, caught my attention since I found it hard to comprehend why anyone would choose to wear this garment, especially in the Western part of the world.

Over the last years I have noticed what seems like increasing polarisation between those who see themselves as representatives of Islam and those who identify with the West. It appears to be a conflict of values. As a European, I am concerned with the relationship between the Muslim minority and the mainly Christian/secular populations of Europe, and whether the European Muslims consider themselves as "Europeans" and are accepted as such. This topic was the starting point for this work.

I had no relations with Bosnia and Bosnian Muslims before I attended a course at the University of Oslo called "Religious pluralism in the Balkans", which took me on a few days study trip to Bosnia and Sarajevo together with other students in fall 2004. In Bosnia I was reminded that there are Muslims in Europe that necessarily must identify themselves as Europeans because they have been Europeans and Muslims for generations. I then realised the relevance of exploring the relationship between Europe and Islam in Bosnia. This, and the desire to learn more about Bosnia, made me return a year later to do fieldwork. I also attempted to learn their language. Before my departure from Oslo I had taken a beginner's course in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian language. In Sarajevo I occasionally had lessons with a private language teacher, but for the most part I learned the language from self-study. Back in Norway I continued to learn the language by taking courses at the University of Oslo.

At my first visit in Sarajevo I noticed that there were a number of females with *hijab*. I observed how feminine and attractive many of them looked when wearing *hijab* combined with modern, fashionable clothes and make-up, and I reflected over whether this was *the Bosnian way* of dressing in accordance to Islam.<sup>1</sup> Based on what I had already learned about Bosnia's history and the Muslim population, I formed my initial research questions: Why do so many young women in Sarajevo wear the *hijab*? Had the war and the strong presence of foreigners (peace keepers and aid workers) contributed to increased religious observance

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<sup>1</sup> This style of dress is also common among Muslims in Oslo, my hometown, but I had never reflected over how Muslim women in Bosnia would dress. I probably expected them to dress either modern or conservative.

among Muslims in Bosnia? Did the contact with Middle-Eastern countries inspire the official interpretation of Islam moving towards a more strict line? Did the women with *hijab* interpret Islam differently from the majority which doesn't wear *hijab*? Does the *hijab* express an ethnic/national Muslim identity especially directed towards the Bosnian Serbs and Croats or does it address a supposedly "Islamophobic" Europe?

These initial thoughts and impressions constituted my pre-understanding of Bosnian Muslims. A person's pre-understanding is that person's comprehension about someone or something before having had a first hand experience of the issue at hand. This immediate understanding is based upon earlier acquired knowledge and experience, and manifests as the categories and concepts through which we analyse and comprehend the world (Rosmer 2005:50). As I prepared for the interviews by reading about Islam in Bosnia my pre-understanding obtained a stronger foundation, it became more based on reality and less on assumptions.

During the fieldwork in Sarajevo (August – December 2005 and January – May 2006) I experienced that talking to real human beings is invaluable when trying to understand an unfamiliar phenomenon. By listening to them and learn about their perspectives, I obtained an understanding I could never have acquired from reading books alone. What earlier didn't make that much sense, now became intelligible and reasonable. My stay in Sarajevo gave me a unique possibility to enrich my knowledge about Islam and to learn how being a Muslim involves different things for different women.

I have chosen to decorate the thesis with a selection of pictures. The pictures from Sarajevo and Mostar are my private pictures from my stay in Bosnia. The pictures of women with *hijab*-fashion clothes are found at the homepage of Taj fashion studio:

<http://www.modnistudiotaj.com/fotogalerija.html>. The map of Bosnia and Herzegovina: courtesy of the University of Texas Libraries, The University of Texas at Austin (<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/bosnia.html>).

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the last decades, the question of Islam's compatibility with Western culture has created much debate. The debate takes place both among Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>2</sup> There are several questions that are characteristic of a Western, non-Muslim point of view: Is Islam compatible with a modern, democratic and secularised society? Is Islam in harmony with the human rights, especially concerning the equal rights of men and women? Lately and particularly after 9/11, new types of questions have come up: are the Muslim minorities living in Western countries a possible threat to their own societies? Can Muslims be trusted as loyal citizens of the Western countries in which they live?<sup>3</sup> And finally, will the ongoing worldwide conflicts and what appears to be an inevitable polarisation between representatives of Islam and representatives of the West lead to a violent "clash of civilisations"?<sup>4</sup> In Europe and the West, Islam is still viewed as something foreign, and after the terror attacks that have taken place on American and European soil since 2001, Muslims are increasingly seen as a possible threat to the security of Western countries.<sup>5</sup>

Muslims, on the other hand, question why Islam, which they regard as a message of peace, is often perceived of as synonymous with terror in Western media, and why the Muslim majority is collectively held responsible for actions committed by a handful of extremists. Muslims in the West are forced to question their very existence as a minority as many fear they will lose their religion, culture and distinct identity. They face the ultimate question of how to avoid cultural colonisation and total assimilation (Ramadan 2002:207).

This description of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims is discouraging. What appears to be a wall of distrust, contempt, and sometimes hatred may have some basis in reality, but it can also be a product of the anti-Muslim/Islam political

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<sup>2</sup> It is problematic to make a dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims. By doing this I seem to imply that all Muslims are the same and therefore different from all those who are not. I did consider calling the native non-Muslim population of Europe "Christian/secular", but this would have indicated that Muslims in general are more religious than other Europeans, something I have no reason to assert. However, since my focus is on Islam and how the adherence to both Islam and Europe affect the identity and sense of belonging of Bosnian Muslims, I find it useful to contrast those who identify themselves as active Muslims with those who do not. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that these expressions are not merely descriptive, in a sense they also construct the reality they seek to describe.

<sup>3</sup> Tariq Ramadan addresses these questions in his book published in 1999: "To be a European Muslim". He concludes that whether a Muslim can be both a true European citizen and a true Muslim and member of the Islamic *umma* is really a non-issue, since nationality and faith are of different natures. He also stresses that Muslims like all other citizens are bound by the state's constitution and laws (Ramadan 1999:162-164).

<sup>4</sup> Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations?" puts forth the hypotheses that future world conflicts will principally be between civilisations, and that a conflict between the Western and the Islamic civilisation is not an unlikely scenario (Huntington 1993).

<sup>5</sup> In a short historical perspective this is a new development. However, in the period of the expanding Islamic Empire, and later the Ottoman Empire, Islam was indeed an actual military threat to Europe.

discourse that frequently appears in Western media (and equally, the anti-Western discourse in Muslim media). Reasons for the increased polarisation and Western scepticism towards Islam and Muslims are complex and possible explanations are to be found both in the historical encounters between Christianity and Islam and in recent and contemporary events. Independent of what the causes might be; how does this polarisation affect the Muslims who live in European and Western countries? How does it affect the identity and sense of belonging of the European Muslims? The “Declaration of European Muslims”<sup>6</sup>, written by the head of the Bosnian Islamic Community (IC), *Reis-ul-ulema*<sup>7</sup> Dr. Mustafa Cerić (and colleagues), is a response to the increasingly stigmatising climate felt by Muslims in Europe. The declaration relates these anti-Muslim sentiments directly to the terror attacks in New York, Madrid and London, which are described as acts of violence against humanity, which have been linked to Islam and referred to in Western media as Islamic terrorism. As a consequence “...European Muslims live under the heavy pressure of a collective guilt for “Islamic terrorism”” and are made to “...suffer from islamophobia due to an irresponsible coverage of the Muslim issues in Europe by some media” (Cerić 2005:1). Throughout the declaration in which the head of the Bosnian Islamic Community attempts to carve out his vision of Islam in Europe, the duties, rights and expectations of the Muslims living in Europe are accounted for. The Reis stresses several times that they are European Muslims and have the right, indeed the duty, to “develop their own European culture of Islam” (2005:4).

### ***Theoretical perspectives –European Muslims***

The overall topic addressed in this thesis is the relationship between Islam and Europe and what it implies to be both a Muslim and a European citizen. Based on qualitative method with half-structured interviews, my inquiry might have been conducted anywhere in Europe since all European countries have Muslim minorities. I have chosen to write this thesis about Muslim women in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>8</sup>, focusing on their identity as Muslim women, Bosniaks (*bošnjakinje*<sup>9</sup>) and Europeans.

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<sup>6</sup> This declaration is the opening text of the 2006 *Takvim* (the Islamic almanac) for the Bosnian Muslims. The declaration was first put forward on the conference for the Islamic Forum of Europe in London August 27, 2005, in relation with the then recent terror attacks in London (July 7, 2005). It was also presented to the Human rights tribunal in Strasbourg in spring 2006. An English translation exists on the homepage of the Bosnian Islamic Community, Rijaset: [http://www.rijaset.ba/images/stories/deklaracija/Declaration\\_eng.doc](http://www.rijaset.ba/images/stories/deklaracija/Declaration_eng.doc).

<sup>7</sup> *Reis ul-ulema* (head of the Islamic scholars) is the leader of the Islamic Community (IC) (*Islamska Zajednica, IZ*) in Bosnia and the highest spiritual leader of the Bosnian Muslims.

<sup>8</sup> Hereafter I will use the term Bosnia instead of the full name Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Bosna i Hercegovina*). Bosnia is the regional term for most of the country, Bosnia proper, while Herzegovina refers to the south-western



While the term Bosnian refers to all the inhabitants of Bosnia, regardless of national and religious identity, Bosniak is the national name the Bosnian Muslims employ for themselves, distinguishing their national identity from the two other major national groups in Bosnia, the Bosnian Serbs and Croats.<sup>10</sup> However, not all Bosniaks are believing/practising Muslims. In the following I will use the term Bosniak in the sense of nationality, regardless of religious observance and conviction, and Bosnian Muslim when I refer to those who are Muslims in the religious sense.

The present work seeks to examine how the different components of the informants' identity (i.e. being a Muslim, Bosniak and European) influence their understanding of Islam, and to examine in concrete terms what is involved for them to be Muslim women, particularly the choice whether to wear *hijab* or not. In my opinion it is especially interesting to focus on the relationship between Islam and Europe in Bosnia since the Bosnian Muslims are part of the traditional European population, as opposed to the Muslim immigrants of Western Europe. Ethnically speaking, Bosnian Muslims are South-Slavs who converted to Islam during the Ottoman period (1463-1878). They are also the largest group of native European Muslims.

By presenting the relationship between Islam and Europe and between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe as a problematic matter I am not implying that relations are doomed to remain so, or that Muslims can never become an integrated part of Europe. An increasing number of Muslims are born in Europe and to many of them there may be nothing conflicting in their religious affiliation and their national and cultural adherence. For the Bosnian Muslims, who have been Europeans and Muslims for generations, this dichotomisation between Islam and Europe might even seem absurd, though not unfamiliar. However, Western meta-narratives about Islam, placing Islam and the West in permanent opposition and portraying Muslims as religiously, culturally and politically foreign, influence on how the European Muslims experience and define their identity (Cesari 2007). These narratives about Islam have shaped how people in the West comprehend a number of recent events; events which have had negative implications on Muslim-European relations. The outcome might be that it becomes even more difficult to uphold a coherent and harmonic identity as a Muslim

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part surrounding Mostar. In some instances, when it seems more appropriate, I might use the official name Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>9</sup> Bosnian language has a masculine and feminine form of animate nouns. When I refer to the interview-material in the analysis I will therefore use the Bosnian words for Bosniak, which are: *bošnjakinja* (*bošnjakinje* pl.) for a female and *bošnjak* for a male. The same goes for Bosnian, a female is called *bosanka* and a male *bosanac*.

<sup>10</sup> What distinguishes the Bosniaks from the Serbs and Croats, whom they otherwise share a common South-Slavic descent and language with, is their Muslim religious and cultural heritage.

and an inhabitant of a European country. The primary event I have in mind is the still ongoing “war on terror”. Other incidents which may have led to a stigmatising climate for Muslims and tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe lately are the French ban on the use of *hijab*<sup>11</sup> and the controversy over the cartoons of the prophet Muhammed, which was a burning issue during spring 2006<sup>12</sup>. The strong Muslim reaction to these caricatures, in the form of rage or the expression of offence and hurt feelings, could be understood as expressing a deeper dissatisfaction and resentment, but it also became clear that there is a real disagreement about values. For non-Muslim Europeans the right to freedom of speech was at stake, for the Muslims the issue concerned lack of respect for Islam.

So what about the Bosnian Muslims who take pride in being both Muslim and European, how do they handle the “divide” between Europe and Islam and how does the polarised situation worldwide affect their identity and sense of belonging? Do they stress their connection with Europe or the wider Muslim world, or do they simply see themselves as Bosnian Muslims with their own Bosnian Islamic tradition? They have recently been through a malicious war<sup>13</sup> (1992-1995) in which they were the victims of war crimes committed by their Serb and Croat neighbours.<sup>14</sup> With this experience fresh in mind they certainly do not have an unequivocal positive image of the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in Europe. To many Bosniaks the ethnic cleansing and belated intervention of the international community to put a stop to the atrocities happened exactly because they are Muslims instead of Christian Europeans.

In spite of the recent war with its human suffering and far reaching consequences, which are hard to comprehend, Bosnia is a place where Islam and Christian/European cultural traditions have existed peacefully together, side-by-side for centuries. However, Bosnia is not like any other European country: situated in the Balkans it is often referred to as “a bridge between East and West” and a meeting ground where the Christian Catholic West and the Muslim and Christian Orthodox East have had their encounters throughout history. Especially

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<sup>11</sup> February 10, 2004, the French National Assembly passed a legislation that banned the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols and garments in the school. The French legislation led to discussions about the wearing of *hijab* in many other Western-European countries.

<sup>12</sup> Two years after, in 2008, this is still an issue, and more caricatures have been printed. The Muslim reaction is not as strong as it initially was, but it is clear that this is still a source of conflict and hostility.

<sup>13</sup> Or “aggression”, as almost every Bosniak I have spoken to about this topic would call it. Also Christian Moe mentions that it is common among Bosniaks to interpret what happened as “aggression”, an illegal attack by Serbia and Croatia (Moe 2005:18). Albeit I sympathise with their interpretation, I will use the more common term war.

<sup>14</sup> All three parties were found among the victims and among those who made themselves guilty of war crimes. However, the majority of the victims were Bosniaks and an overwhelming majority of the perpetrators were Serbs.

Sarajevo has become a symbol of Bosnia's cultural and religious pluralism. On several occasions inhabitants of Sarajevo would proudly point out to me that a mosque, a synagogue, a Catholic Cathedral and an Orthodox church exist within few square metres of the city centre. For the Bosniaks the co-existence of churches and mosques throughout the country is a testimony of the religious tolerance that was exercised during the Ottoman period (Moe 2003:5).

As a result of globalisation, the collapse of Yugoslavia and the devastating war which brought foreigners to Bosnia and scattered Bosnians all over the world, Bosnia has become a much more open country. This has resulted in increased contact with the rest of the Muslim world and foreign Islamic influence in Bosnia in the form of charities, NGOs, mosques and cultural centres. Today, Bosnia, like all the other Eastern-European countries, is aiming at membership in the European Union - a name which in Bosnian public discourse seems to have become a synonym with Europe, a Europe they are not yet included in.

### ***The research focus***

To explore the relationship between Islam and Europe in a Bosnian context and how the informants perceive of their identity and sense of belonging I have decided to focus on the way Muslim women dress: whether they choose to cover their hair or not, different ways of wearing the *hijab*, choice of colours, shape of dress, make-up, and so forth. The reason why I focus on dress and appearance is because it implies a choice of how we present ourselves to others and which signals we give regarding who we are and what we stand for. Clothes and everything regarding our physical appearance is a way to express identity, or more correctly, to stress certain parts of it. In Sarajevo you can find Muslim women dressing in a variety of ways: in Western fashion, Western fashion combined with *hijab*, *hijab* and wide clothes typical for the Middle East, and a minority of women who are "totally covered", meaning that they have a piece of clothe called *niqab* (a veil) covering the face but usually leaving the eyes free. Some of these women also wear gloves. Most important, for Muslim women the way of dressing reflects their understanding of Islam and what it involves for them to be a Muslim woman. Bosnian Muslims disagree about whether it is obligatory or not for Muslim women to cover their hair, what the exact reasons for this practice are, and, what is the appropriate way of covering. While some will stress that to cover the hair is obligatory for women and necessary in all societies, others say that this is not obligatory in contemporary Bosnia and Europe where it has lost its original purpose. Independent of whether they see *hijab* as

obligatory or not, all my informants agree that to wear it or not is a decision every woman must make for herself. This seems to be the general opinion among Bosnian Muslims.

The Arabic word *hijab* derives from *hajaba*, which means to "conceal" or "hide", and can be employed for all kinds of veils or curtains that conceal a person or an object. In the Quran, *hijab* is employed in relation to segregation and separation. In recent times, *hijab* is now used to refer to headdress and the overall prescribed Islamic dress for women (Vogt 2004:26-27). *Hijab* refers in this thesis to the piece of cloth that Muslim women use to cover their hair, whether that is a tight scarf that covers only the hair or a wide shawl that covers hair, neck, shoulders and most of the upper-body. The covering of the face with *niqab* is understood to be something worn in addition to *hijab*. The Islamic sources my informants referred to in order to explain why Muslim women must cover their hair and bodies will be accounted for in Chapter 5. My informants mostly use the words *marama* (headscarf), *šal* (shawl) or simply *pokrivene žene* (covered women) to refer to what I call *hijab*. Most of them were familiar with the term *hijab*, which is common in English books about Islam, but they underlined that they did not use this expression themselves. Some of the women associated the word *hijab* with the veiling of the face, which is actually closer to the original meaning of the word according to *surah* 33:53 (see Chapter 5). I will nevertheless use *hijab* to describe the headdress of Muslim women. This is to highlight that the Islamic headdress is not merely a piece of cloth, but the fulfilment of a religious obligation, the aim of which is to regulate male-female relations in society. *Hijab* involves both dress and conduct, and it is connected to central female virtues. Whether to refer to the Islamic headdress with the words my informants employ, like "covered women" or scarf (they mostly used English terms in the interviews), or to use the term *hijab*, relates to the dilemma of grounded theory. The idea of grounded theory is to apply analytical categories that are close to the material and situation in question, and to not simply interpret phenomena in one religion by referring to similar phenomena in other religions, especially since the concepts employed in the study of religion often have a Western-Christian connotation (Stensvold 2007:58-59). *Hijab* is certainly not a word with Western origin, but it is possible that Western scholars are particularly keen to employ the term because it mystifies the Islamic headdress and sets it apart as a phenomenon that must be understood on completely different terms than female clothing and veiling in general. I still consider the term *hijab* functional, because it grasps the essential meaning most

of my informants attach to the headdress. Nevertheless, when I refer to the interview-material I will always use the words they themselves applied for what I call *hijab*.<sup>15</sup>

Muslim women with *hijab* are a minority in Sarajevo, as in Bosnia and Europe in general. Through their dress they signalise that they are women who have taken a conscious choice to dress in a way that they see to be in accordance with Islam. This involves going against the dominant trend of Western fashion, a way of dressing preferred by the majority of Muslim women in Bosnia. Most Bosniaks see the covering of hair, and especially the covering of face and hands as well, as something “new” and against what is considered normal.<sup>16</sup> According to some of my informants, this widespread understanding is a consequence of the secularised lifestyle adopted through decades of communism, a period when religious practice was restricted to the private sphere. In the Ottoman period Bosnian Muslim women did practise a way of dressing which also involved *niqab*, but this was forbidden by the Communists in 1950 (Donia 2006:220), and to cover one’s hair was frowned upon, though not formally forbidden. So due to restriction, secularisation and the increased cultural identification with modern Europe, wearing *hijab* is today the exception and not the norm.

By focusing on my informants’ way of dressing and how they understand the Islamic rules and argumentation about this matter, I want to say something about their identity and sense of belonging. The Islamic precept that women should cover their hair and body cannot be understood without seeing it in relation to the Islamic understanding of gender roles. Islamic and Western ideals and practices represent divergent views on these matters, and separate Western and Muslim discourses have developed in which Western and Muslim women are compared to each other. Western discourse has from colonial times presented the condition of Muslim women as downtrodden, and the *hijab* and the veil have been understood as a sign for the oppression of Muslim women. A common view is that Muslim women are forced to wear these clothes. This depiction of Muslim women has naturally created resistance and is being disputed. A Muslim strategy is to present Western women in the same simplistic manner: Western women are portrayed as lonely sex objects who have chosen a career instead of a family life and thereby betrayed their femininity. They have no dignity, and are therefore neither loved nor respected by those around them. Compared to Muslim women, Western women are naked (not covered), and their lack of clothes is symbolic for their unfortunate

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<sup>15</sup> Sometimes the informants too said *hijab*, but I think this most often was because I used that word in my questions, and it was therefore natural for them to employ the same word in their answer.

<sup>16</sup> This claim is based on the experiences of many of my informants and others I have talked to about this topic.

existence. While people in the West talk about free women and suppressed women, the Muslim discourse is about women with and without dignity. These debates have made the woman, and whether she is covered or not, into a symbol of the difference between the West and the Muslim world (Thorbjørnsrud 2004:49-51). In this perspective it is clear that my informants' opinions about the *hijab* and the role of woman reflect their cultural belonging, i.e. which cultural tradition that exercises most influence over them. However, as will become clear, not all Muslim women understand the *hijab* within a traditional Islamic framework. The *hijab* might be linked to an "East-West dichotomy" and a collective Muslim identity in opposition to the West, but most of all the wearing of *hijab* is connected to individual religiosity and identity.

In order to shed light on how my informants understand their role as Muslim women, I have chosen to structure my analysis as a parallel to Pia Karlsson Minganti's PhD in ethnology called *Muslima* (2007). *Muslima* is based on fieldwork conducted with nine young Muslim women who are active in the new Islamic revival movement in Sweden. The women, who have different national backgrounds, all came to Sweden as refugees during their childhood. Minganti has a feminist approach which she combines with postcolonial theory<sup>17</sup>. The book focuses on the women's possibilities for agency by examining how they negotiate over gender roles: "That is: how did the women understand descriptions of masculinity and femininity, the norms for distribution of resources between men and women, their relations and plights in life? How did they accommodate, challenge, and resist such norms and ideals?" (2007:286). Minganti discusses how the women relate to the virtues they as Muslim women are encouraged to achieve, such as modesty, patience and piety, and the common perception of femininity as shy, dependent and in need of protection. She found that on the one hand the women strived to fulfil these virtues and accepted men as patrons and providers. However, this one-dimensional understanding of the Muslim woman was challenged by the women's own experiences as actors. Through their *dawa*-activity (missionary-work) they developed an understanding of the Muslim woman as strong, courageous and capable of action. Three of the chapters in Minganti's book are built around the ideal roles the women associate themselves with, i.e. the modest ambassador for Islam, the protected woman within the family sphere, and the *al-mujahida*, the female activist fighting for Islam involved in *dawa*. I will

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<sup>17</sup> Postcolonial theory claims that the knowledge which legitimated colonisation by systematically looking at the colonised people as different, and ultimately "the other", is still prevailing when Western scholars attempt to understand people from other cultures (Minganti 2007:14). The foremost proponent of this theory is Edward Said. In *Orientalism* (2003) he explains how the European production of knowledge about the Orient was most of all a means to define Europe (as a contrast to the Orient).

analyse my material in relation to these Muslim feminine ideals, “the modest one”, “the protected one” and “the combative one”, because they all highlight the different meanings my informants attach to the wearing of *hijab*. Moreover, since it is my objective to shed light on what it involves to be a European Muslim woman, i.e. to live in an environment in which you experiences that your “truth” is different from, and at times opposite of, the majority’s “truth”, it is interesting to compare Bosnian Muslim women with immigrant Swedish Muslim women. However, while Minganti focuses on gender negotiations, my main focus is on identity.

### ***Islam as identity –theoretical approaches***

Being a Bosnian Muslim does not just have religious implications. During communism the Muslims gained status as one of Yugoslavia’s six nationalities under the name *Musliman*<sup>18</sup>, thereby making what was mainly a religious community into a political one, and creating a national identity out of a religiously/ethnically based identity. In 1993 the Bosnian Muslims replaced *Musliman*, which many considered to be a communist artefact, with Bosniak (*Bošnjak*), a name still in use and still largely based upon their shared religious affiliation. I will go into detail about the relationship between religious and national identity in Chapter 3. The point I wish to make here is that being Muslim in Bosnia is not necessarily connected with being religious. Islam is the foundation of the Bosniaks’ cultural and national identity.

Opposed to certain culturalist-based approaches, which view Islam and Muslims in terms of an individual or group essence (Cesari 2008:49), I understand Muslim identity as a process. This refers to the fact that identity continuously has to be created and maintained in interaction with others. Muslim identity involves a multiplicity of cultural and social contexts and individual experiences resulting in a plurality of Muslim identities. The focus of this thesis is on how Bosnian Muslim women construct their identity in relation to Islam, other Muslims and the Bosnian and European context. For some women Islam is understood as one of several components of their identity; others find in Islam an all-encompassing identity. My approach to identity relies mainly on the sociological theorisation of Anthony Giddens (1991) and Richard Jenkins (2004). Giddens focuses on identity as a reflexive endeavour: in a globalised world the individual must construct her/his identity, choosing from a diversity of

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<sup>18</sup>*Musliman* is in fact the Bosnian word for Muslim, but written with an initial capital letter the word distinguishes itself from the term *musliman*, meaning a Muslim in the religious sense. The term *Musliman* was an invention of the socialist regime, intended to be a national identity only. So in theory one could be *Musliman* and at the same time belong to the Catholic or Christian Orthodox faith. However, in reality this was very unlikely.

options and possibilities. Jenkins' main point is that individual and collective identities are part of the same process (not different kinds of phenomena), and that both emerge out of the interplay of internal and external identification; i.e., identity is socially constructed. In Chapter 4 I will account for central aspects of Giddens' and Jenkins' identity-theory which illuminate why Bosnian Muslim women construct and express their identity differently.

### ***Different ways of relating to Islam –research categories***

While most Bosnian women who use *hijab* try to blend into society by combining their headgear with modern clothing, others are less willing to make compromises. Women who dress entirely in black and cover their face, and men with long beards and short trousers, are often referred to as “Wahhabis” (*Vehabija*), i.e. Muslims who identify with the official interpretation of Islam in Saudi-Arabia. Whether these Bosnian Muslims follow a Wahhabi-understanding of Islam is questionable and I will discuss this in Chapter 3, under the heading “Current Islamic trends”. However, because most Bosniaks refer to these Muslims as “Wahhabis”, so will I. I did not interview anyone who called herself a “Wahhabi”. However, I did ask my informants about their opinion on a more literalist way of practising Islam in comparison with the less stringent Bosnian Islamic tradition preached by IC, and I asked them how they felt about foreign Islamic influence in Bosnia. My informants' attitudes varied from sympathy to aversion towards a more literalist way of interpreting Islam.

It is normal for people to disagree about the right understanding of a religion, and this is no less true for Muslims. The Bosnian Muslims received Islam from Turkey during the Ottoman period, and as a result they follow the Hanafi School of law, which was the official law-school in the Ottoman Empire. They have been a quite homogenous group regarding religious practice and interpretation, something which was also true during the communist period, when most Bosnian Muslims seemed to adapt to a secular outlook and accepted the fact that religion had been banished to the private sphere of society.

In order to describe Bosnian Muslims' somewhat different understanding of Islam and their Muslim identity I have designed four categories. On the one hand there is the large group of Muslims that I will refer to as “secularised/cultural Muslims”. While some of them may follow a few of the Islamic prescriptions, like fasting during Ramadan, praying occasionally and abstain from drinking alcohol, others practise religion to an absolute minimum, for



example abstain from drinking alcohol during Ramadan only<sup>19</sup>. Nevertheless, they still consider themselves as Muslims, both in the cultural and religious sense. For them, Islam is a private and individual matter. This way of relating to Islam is in sharp contrast to how those popularly referred to as “Wahhabis”, a second group of Muslims, practice Islam. The third group consists of committed Muslims who observe Islam but focus on the Bosnian Islamic tradition and stress their Bosniak identity and European cultural belonging. They distance themselves from foreign Islamic influence, notably the “Wahhabis”, whose way of practising Islam they see as improper for Bosnia and mostly a negative and disturbing influence. The fourth group consists of those who are committed to what I will refer to as “global Islam”, because their understanding of Islam appears to be quite independent of any specific cultural or normative tradition, i.e. country or Islamic school of law. They read the Quran and try to understand the Islamic message independent of local customs and cultural circumstances. They stress the importance of Muslims adjusting themselves to the law of God instead of adjusting God’s law to society, whether that society is Bosnia, Norway, Morocco, Indonesia or any other country. However, this does not indicate that they are unwilling to adjust themselves to the laws of the society where they live. The best name for them might be “*umma*-Muslims”, insofar as the idea of a supranational *umma*, a global Muslim community, seems to be at the core of their identity.

These categories are an analytical device. They should not be understood as a continuum consisting of strict categories, i.e. the separation between them is fluid. In practice, of course, people are not just one thing or the other, but normally a mix resulting from different influences in their lives.

A distinction can be made between a group and a category. While the members of a group recognise each other as members of the same community, membership in a category is an analytical decision and does not necessarily correspond to the members’ own understanding. However, when the members of a category recognise their categorisation, they might eventually begin to see themselves as a distinct group (Jenkins 2004:85). The categories I have constructed to describe the different manners Bosnian Muslims relate to Islam are probably familiar to my informants, at least the categories “secularised/cultural Muslims”, “Bosnian Islam” and “Wahhabis”. While members of the two first categories are likely to recognise their membership in these categories, those who are labelled “Wahhabis”

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<sup>19</sup> To not drink alcohol during Ramadan, Islam’s holy month, seems to be a prescription observed by all Bosniaks, even if they don’t consider themselves religious. However, at *bajram* (*id al-fitr*), the three-day long feast at the end of Ramadan, some celebrate by going out and drinking alcohol (based on my own observations during Ramadan 2005).

will surely agree that they are different from the Bosnian Muslim majority, but instead of calling themselves “Wahhabis”, they will almost certainly argue that they only follow true Islam (and are therefore merely Muslims). It is questionable whether the category “global Islam” is known to those of my informants it applies to. Yet, I think they will acknowledge what this term is intended to convey: to downplay differences between Muslims and focus on Islam as a universal religion independent of local culture.

Roughly speaking the categories “cultural/secular Muslims” and “Bosnian Islam” agree with what Christian Moe and Ahmet Alibašić (2006) call “mainstream”, while “global Islam” and “Wahhabis” are consistent with the category “fringe” (see Chapter 3). In order to highlight the identity-dimension and to better describe nuances among Bosnian Muslims I find it useful to apply these four categories. Out of these four, I found that my informants belonged to “Bosnian Islam” and “global Islam”. The difference between these two categories does not relate to degree of religiosity; i.e. the *umma*-Muslims are not more religious than the “Bosnian Muslims”, or opposite. Where their relationship to the sources, the Quran and the *sunna* (the Prophet’s tradition) is concerned, a distinction can be made between the two categories: those in favour of “global Islam” are more reluctant to adjust Islam to local culture (in fear of altering the original message), and can therefore be described as literalist compared to those who follow “Bosnian Islam”. It is quite common to differentiate between Muslims based on how they relate to the Islamic sources and to what degree they think Islamic law (*sharia*) should be the foundation of social, political and legal institutions. The Bosnian expert on Islamic law, professor Fikret Karčić, for example, distinguishes between secularists, traditionalists, Islamic modernists and revivalists (cf. Bougarel 2007:103). I did not ask my informants about what role they think *sharia* should play in Bosnia today (it is a widespread opinion among Bosnian Muslims that Islamic law cannot be applied unless the Muslims are an absolute majority). However, how they relate to the Islamic sources and to what degree they follow *sharia* in their own lives, will be discussed in relation to clothing and gender-relations.

### ***The foundation of the inquiry; the informants***

The interviews this thesis is based on were carried out during my stay in Sarajevo, which lasted for three and a half months in fall 2005 and four months in spring 2006. I found my informants through various channels, mostly by contacting NGOs and the Islamic faculty at the University of Sarajevo (see chapter 2). What characterises most of the women I have

interviewed is that they are active in society through their job and/or organisational work. The majority have or are undergoing higher education and were fluent in English in order to make communication possible. However, as my Bosnian language skills improved, I was also able to interview some women without such good knowledge of English. I made sure to interview both women with and without *hijab*. The women with *hijab* dressed in different types of clothes, and I tried to find out how that corresponded with their understanding of Islam and their Muslim identity. I will go into detail about the fieldwork process and the interviews in Chapter 2. The appendix contains a list of informants (they are all given pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity). All my informants agreed to take part in this survey. At this point I wish to emphasise that the focus of this thesis is not on the individual story of each person. Therefore I have collected valuable information not only through the long interviews but also through every informal conversation and every tit bit of relevant information I came across that could shed some light to the issue at hand. Living in Sarajevo for several months also helped me to get a sense of the bigger picture and helped me to develop a deeper understanding of Islam in Bosnia. While the interview-data constitute the concrete material for my analysis, everything else I learned about Bosnian Muslims will function as a valuable background.







The square of Baščaršija, the bazaar built in Ottoman time. In the middle of the picture is one of Sarajevo's most popular landmarks; Sebilj, a public water fountain.



The Islamic faculty (*Fakultet Islamskih nauka*), established in 1977.



## Chapter 2: The research process

The methodological perspective of this thesis is situated within a post-modern constructivist tradition, i.e. it acknowledges the constructivist character of all knowledge. Regarding qualitative interview as a method for attaining information, the constructivist view implies that the interview data is considered as something which is *created* through the interaction between the interviewer and the person interviewed. The data relate to the real world and give valuable information about how the person interviewed comprehends events in her life but is, nevertheless, a result of the interview. This means the interview data must be seen in relation to the perspective of the researcher, the focus of the inquiry, the concrete questions asked, how the informant perceives the interviewer and the overall dynamic between the participants in the interview (Öhlander 1999:20).

### ***Qualitative research interview***

The qualitative research interview is based on everyday conversation, but distinguishes itself from an informal conversation because of a certain structure and the scientific purpose of the conversation (Kvale 2006:21). In order to achieve the advantages of the informal everyday conversation – that is, a relaxed atmosphere where the participants feel free to speak openly – I tried to avoid asking interview questions in a fixed order. This represented a methodological dilemma: on the one hand, I needed to create an informal atmosphere; yet, at the same time, I also had to ask those questions which the informant could perceive as critical and sensitive.

With one exception, I made arrangements for the interviews in advance. The meetings took place in the informant's home, workplace or a café, depending on what the person in question preferred. Altogether I conducted 22 interviews, out of which 15 were recorded. Four of the interviews took place in a group setting, while the rest was carried out with only one respondent at the time. Five of the informants I interviewed two or more times, but with the majority I was only able to conduct one interview. This indicates that I developed a better understanding of, and relationship with, some of my informants than others. The total number of informants who have contributed to this thesis is 18. Out of these 18, I made in-depth interviews with 12. The youngest of my informants is 18 and the oldest is 70-years-old. The majority is in their 20s and 30s.

I made use of a standard interview-guide that covered the topics I wanted to talk about. The guide consisted of different themes with suggestions for concrete questions. I usually



started asking the informants why they had decided to cover their hair or not, and what their concrete personal experiences were. As my understanding of the field increased, I realised that not all of my initial questions were equally relevant. Inevitably, the interview-guide changed along with my understanding of the field – since, of course, qualitative research is a cyclic process. The different aspects of the research, such as the forming of the research questions, the collection of the material, the interpretation and the analysis, take place simultaneously and influence each other mutually (Thagaard 1998:25).

The interview-guide made me able to systematise the data and to maintain a comparative perspective throughout the fieldwork and later in the analysis. A tactical move in this respect was to “let the informants converse with each other.” In conversation with one person, I would present the statements of others (anonymously) and ask what her opinions about that particular issue were. I found this to be an especially useful method to find in what matters my informants actually disagree, and in which cases different ways of expressing oneself made it seem my informants held divergent opinions.

I used a recorder and taped the interviews, which I later transcribed. Even though all the informants gave me permission to record our conversation, I sometimes had the impression that the permission was given reluctantly and, as a result, that the presence of the recorder made some of them more restrained and self-conscious about how they expressed themselves. I still chose to use a recorder because I considered it even more disturbing for the communication if I were to take notes for every answer given. Besides, a recorder is an invaluable tool in order to avoid selective memory and gives authenticity to the material. Because I explained this to my informants and stressed that no one other than I would listen to the interviews, they all agreed. Apparently, what seemed to be the biggest concern for many was that they would be misconstrued in a foreign language (English).

An additional method for obtaining information from an interview is observation. The use of body language and other non-verbal communication can underline or contradict what is being said, and is therefore a useful corrective to the oral interview data (1998:85). In my case, observation also had another purpose: namely, to observe what the informant was wearing. I observed how those with their hair covered framed their *hijab*, what kind of colours they made use of, length and width of clothes, whether they used make-up, jewellery, high-heels, and the overall impression of their physical appearance (which is a matter of my comprehension).

In my attempt to understand my informants and their point-of-view, I asked them to recommend me relevant literature about Islam. My idea was that this would not only help me



to learn more about Islam, but also find out what they considered to be important and correct information about their religion. The recommended literature I have made use of is marked with an asterisk (\*) in the Bibliography.

### ***Recruitment of informants***

The strategy for recruitment of informants was to apply the “snowball method.” This method consists in first establishing contact with a couple of informants and then let those initial contacts lead you to new ones by asking them to suggest friends or acquaintances who might be interested in taking part in the survey. To prevent the selection of informants from being one-sided, i.e. consisting of people who belong to the same circle of acquaintances and are more likely to hold similar attitudes towards certain phenomena and share the same experiences, it is important to establish contact within different networks (Thagaard 1998:54-55). I had this in mind when I started the recruitment-process, especially since it was in my interest to interview women who represent the different Islamic orientations (cf. the categories I use, described in Chapter 1) present in Sarajevo. I therefore made sure that my contacts did not all know each other.

I started looking for informants by contacting a Muslim woman I knew was working in a NGO and a lecturer at the Islamic faculty and, as it happened, these two initial contacts would lead to the majority of the informants who have contributed to this work. My preliminary assumption, which was a likely correlation between choice of dress and religious orientation, proved to be correct in the majority of cases. Therefore, by making sure that my informants consisted of both women with and without *hijab*, and also women who dress quite differently with *hijab* (both modern/fashionable and conservative), I provided for the necessary variation in the selection of informants.

It is always important to reflect over why someone is willing to take part in a research and others are not. And because I applied the “snowball method” and gave already existing informants the task and opportunity to find new informants for me, I had to reflect over what the reasons could be when this or that specific informant was recommended. When I asked my informants if they knew anyone who would be willing to take part in my research, I gave two criteria: one, the person had to be serious about religion and consider herself a believing/practising Muslim. I stressed this point to avoid informants who are “Muslim by name only”, i.e. the large group that I, per my Introduction, refer to as secularised/cultural Muslims. Criterion number two was that the person had to be able to speak English.

It is reasonable to assume that a person is more likely to recommend someone who holds similar attitudes as themselves and who they, therefore, expect to give a correct picture of Islam. In one instance an informant was recommended to me because the person who recommended her thought she would challenge what she assumed to be my prejudices about Islam. Because the recommended informant does not wear *hijab* and is a feminist, she challenges the Western stereotypic image of the Muslim woman. However, in most of the cases, recommended informants seemed to be chosen on mere practical considerations, e.g., people who might have the time and desire to talk to me and, most important, who had sufficient English skills. The total number of possible informants was considerably narrowed down by the fact that I was not able to communicate adequately in their language. On many occasions, informants had several potential informants in mind, but when they realised that they had to be able to speak English, they could not think of any.

All my informants speak English (though not everyone speaks it fluently), and that reflects the fact that most of them have or are undergoing higher education<sup>20</sup>. This entails that my selection of informants is not representative for the entire female Muslim population in Sarajevo, but has an overrepresentation of women with higher education. Since this is qualitative research, this does not represent a weakness in the material, but it should still be kept in mind. To be able to communicate in a manner adequate enough to reach the sought-after understanding and appropriate the informants' perspective was obviously my highest priority, since this is the criterion upon which the qualitative research interview rests. What was important for my purpose was to have informants who dressed in different styles, a goal I accomplished. That I only interviewed one woman who wears *niqab* can be considered a disadvantage because that makes me unable to compare her motivation for wearing the *niqab* with someone else's. I only interviewed one woman with *niqab* because I did not get in touch with anyone else. Informants told me that women with *niqab* are normally not easily accessible because many of them lead a more secluded, family-centric way of life. Probably they would be sceptical of my motives. However, my interest regarding *niqab* was first of all what Muslim women think about this practice.

What characterises most of my informants is that they are conscious about their opinions and have confidence in their interpretation of Islam. They did not mind sharing their understanding of Islam with me because they are certain about the validity of it. Some also considered the interview to be an opportunity to let people know the truth about Islam and to

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<sup>20</sup> During the communist era many learned Russian, not English, in school.

hopefully contribute to lesser prejudices towards women with *hijab*. However, not everyone wanted to share their views with me, and I can only speculate about what the reasons might have been. I completely failed to get access to one Muslim female organisation, despite sending e-mails to two of the leaders and introducing myself to a third at a lecture held by one of my informants. This particular member was very positive towards me; however, since she did not speak English, she was going to ask the organisation's director if they could meet with me. I never heard anything from the director. It is likely they were sceptical, doubting my motives for focusing on this topic. They probably considered the risks by taking part in the research greater than the possible benefits.

### ***My part in “creating” the material***

In order for people to be willing to share their opinions, thoughts and details about their lives with someone they have never met before, that person has to achieve a sufficient amount of trust. If an informant does not have confidence in the interviewer and has doubts about the purpose for the research, that will have serious implications on the communication. Answers can be given reluctantly, information will probably be omitted because the informant fears it might be used in a wrong way, and the interview might never take place.

I expected that my informants would be somewhat critical and leery of me, a non-Muslim and a stranger, as well as my choice of topic. I also feared that I might be viewed as “just another foreigner wanting to have a piece of their post-war misery,” and that they probably were “sick and tired” of outsiders wanting to describe and analyse their reality. That my informants would have prejudices against me, just as I held prejudices against them, I took as a matter of fact. Much of this scepticism I expected to be found in public discourse and the official debates we all become part of as members of society. These official debates were present in the interview-situation in the form of an invisible third instance the informants related to in conversation with me (Pripp 1999:43). The polarised post-9/11 discourse is a good example of this third instance present. For example, when someone would stress that Islam has nothing to do with terrorism, they would also, without my prompting, refer to the Western media-created discourse that often depicts Islam as a terrorist-religion.

In the first months of 2006, the media was dominated by the controversy over the caricatures of the Prophet Muhammed, an episode that had a negative impact on Muslim-European relations. Muslims worldwide asserted these caricatures reinforce an image of a Europe that is hostile towards Islam. On the other hand, for many non-Muslim Europeans, the

Muslims' fierce reactions worldwide, which included flag-burnings and setting fire to embassies, underpinned a widespread comprehension of Muslims as primitive people who easily resort to violence. Because one of the newspapers that printed these insulting cartoons was Norwegian, Muslim demonstrators in Sarajevo and elsewhere reacted by burning the Norwegian flag. As a result of this, I anticipated some negative reactions against me, a Norwegian, but this did not occur; rather, most of my informants expressed embarrassment on behalf of the demonstrators. Some further stressed that a man from Zenica (a city north of Sarajevo), and therefore an outsider, had been responsible for the demonstration, and that Reis Cerić and the Islamic Community had advised against taking part in any demonstration. My informants certainly did not approve of the caricatures, but they chose to rise above it.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are separate Western and Muslim discourses about women. Since I asked critical questions about the *hijab* and wanted to discuss gender roles in Islam, I feared that my informants would see me as a representative of the prejudiced Western discourse, depicting Muslim women as oppressed and without self-determination. My uncovered blond hair, my modern way of dressing and the fact that I come from Western-Europe might have led them into assuming this even before having had the chance to talk to me. With this in mind, I tried to make a good impression. I concluded that I could not do so much about my physical appearance, except from dressing modestly (according to my standards). Besides, Muslim women in Sarajevo dress in different styles, as did my informants. As I have made a focal point of this thesis, they are both Western and Muslim. Some dress similarly to me; others find such style inappropriate. Some are inspired by Western feminism, while others distance themselves from it. Nevertheless, my origin and how I look probably had influence on how some of my informants chose to express themselves. For instance, those informants who dress conservatively and consider it improper for a woman to show her hair and wear tight clothes (as I do) obviously had to find a balance between expressing their views and, at the same time, avoid insulting me. In a few instances I could sense that informants did not express themselves as freely as they probably would have if I too were a conservatively dressed Muslim woman; but for the most part, I found my informants to be very open and honest.

What I found to be most crucial in order to gain trust was to present my project in a convincing way and to be able to answer their questions. It was very challenging to explain what direction my thesis would take since, at that time, I was uncertain what the main focus would eventually be. I could, however, assure those who feared that I would present Islam from a negative point of view, because I knew that I had nothing but good intentions. I

therefore stressed that my thesis could only contribute to a better understanding of Islam and hopefully also to increased acceptance of women with *hijab*.

My religious identity rarely became an issue. Some informants assumed that I was Christian (and Protestant if they had knowledge about the dominant Church in Scandinavia); since I am, in fact, a member of the Norwegian State Church, I did not consider it necessary to correct them and account for my religious views unless they specifically asked. On one occasion, two informants wanted to know where I stood religiously. I did my best to explain that I had been a devout Christian earlier in my life but was now more of an agnostic, and that I viewed Islam as a possible alternative on level with other religions. I had the impression that they could not really comprehend my unsettled position, but at least they were relieved when I answered negative to the question about whether I was an atheist. In conversation with other informants it also became clear that, from a Muslim point-of-view, any religiosity is preferable to atheism. The reason why these two informants were glad to hear that I was not an atheist could, of course, also have been because they doubted that an atheist could understand the Islamic faith. Nevertheless, if I had been an atheist it is not unlikely that it would have made some informants disapprovingly inclined towards me.

Language-problems clearly had negative implications on the communication. English-skills varied, and it was occasionally difficult for my informants and me to understand each other. Meaning was not always clear. Language can both be a barrier and a means to bond. When I contacted informants by telephone I often spoke Bosnian, hoping my informants would appreciate my effort. My eagerness to speak their language actually had some negative consequences, however: I inadvertently led some of my informants to believe that I mastered their language better than I actually did. A few were therefore reluctant to speak English because they believed that my Bosnian-skills might be as good as their English-skills.

### ***The ethical dimension***

The relationship between researcher and informant is not based on equality. The researcher has a concrete agenda with the relationship: to understand and later to analyse the information given by the informant. When the informant agrees to open up and answer the researcher's questions, the informant gives the researcher the power to use this information in a way that can either be positive or destructive for her/him. The confidence the informant has in the researcher places a huge moral responsibility upon the researcher and obliges her/him to protect the informant from all possibly negative consequences from taking part in the

research. There are some ethical guidelines which all researchers must follow, such as making sure that the informants' participation is voluntary and based on informed consent, and that informants who give sensitive information are granted anonymity; but in the end, it is each researcher's individual decision how to handle the ethical dimension of the research. What can prove particularly challenging is to present the informant in a manner that she/he will recognise. Because the researcher does not just reproduce the informant's own understanding, but analyses it by using relevant theoretical perspectives and concepts, there is always a risk that the informant will react negatively to how she/he is presented, and perceive of certain interpretations as wrong and offensive (Aukrust 2005).

During the interview, the researcher and informant collaborate; the distribution of power, then, is more equal. The researcher is the one who defines the situation by asking the questions, but the person interviewed is in position to choose what kind of information to share with the interviewer (Thagaard 1998:101-102). Indeed, sometimes the person interviewed can be the one in charge of the situation. I experienced that some informants held a monologue, so to speak, and I had to really interrupt them to ask my questions. They seemed to have an agenda, and looked at the interview as an opportunity to convey their message.

The informant will constantly evaluate the researcher's behaviour, and decide whether the researcher is trustworthy and someone she/he wants to open up to. This implies that the researcher is dependent on the informant's goodwill in order to acquire information, and the researcher will therefore strive to develop close contact with the informant. To establish close contact with an informant has moral implications. If the relationship becomes "too close," the informant can be led into being more open than she/he initially intended and possibly say things later regretted. To avoid this, the researcher should maintain some distance and also remind the informant of the purpose of the relationship (1998:100-102).

Since I normally used a recorder and interviewed most informants only once, the intention with the conversation could not be mistaken. However, I got to know two of the informants especially well. They both invited me to their homes and we also went out to drink coffee a couple of times. At these coffee-appointments the roles were not clearly defined: were we two friends drinking coffee or were we still interviewer and interviewee? In the midst of such an informal setting, I told one of them that I would not use anything that came up during that conversation in my thesis; nonetheless, the informant in question replied that she did not mind if I did. With the other woman I looked at these coffee-appointments as a mere continuation of the interview, but, in retrospect, I realise that she might not have. It has

therefore become clear to me that, when dealing with informants, it is impossible to leave the role of the researcher behind. Everything the informants say and do influences on my understanding of them as informants. My better understanding of them is, of course, positive; still, it remains my responsibility to be particularly cautious if I choose to refer to information that has been given to me in an informal setting.

When the collection of the material is finished and the researcher starts to work on the analysis, the informant is no longer in an influential position: the initial relationship between researcher and informant becomes one between researcher and text. The researcher must, therefore, avoid regarding informants as objects (1998:102). To present my informants as the complex individuals they are and, at the same time, to describe tendencies and draw some conclusions, is almost an impossible task. I have tried to avoid stereotyping my informants, but since I don't describe 18 different informants (only very superficially in the Appendix), but instead present their experiences and statements to illustrate points, it is inevitable that some will feel that I have not given a true picture of them (because I have not presented the whole picture). Since the informants probably can identify themselves as individuals in the thesis, I fear that some might be disappointed. I have also chosen to categorise my informants, and it is questionable whether they will agree with my categorisation. The categories were not designed prior to the research, but came into being as a result of the understanding I obtained from the interviews, and were therefore not to my informants' knowledge. As I have stressed, the categories are only an analytical tool, and in Chapter 4 I will discuss what categories might be appropriate for the different informants and on what basis.

The main reason why I chose to write this thesis in English was to diminish the negative consequences of the unequal power-relation between the informants and myself. I have also agreed to send my thesis to three of my informants (who are in position to make it available to most informants), something that ensures that I constantly reflect on how my interpretations will be apprehended by them.

### ***Informed consent***

In accordance with research ethics in practice, an individual must give explicit and voluntary consent before becoming the "object" of research. Moreover, the person asked to participate should be in position to make the decision based on relevant information about the overall purpose of the research. This is out of respect for the integrity and autonomy of every individual and in recognition of the fact that the research can have negative consequences for

those who participate. However, in reality these ideals often prove difficult to fulfil one hundred percent (Alver & Øyen 1997:102-110).

Over the course of the fieldwork, I often reflected over to what degree my informants' consent was based on a sufficient amount of information. Were they aware of the aim of the research? Further, did they understand how the information they gave me would be used and what their role in the final analysis would be? I have concluded that they could not have been fully aware of this; after all, I myself did not know what the result would eventually look like. As previously mentioned, the different aspects of the research process influence each other. This involves that the focus of the thesis has developed in-step with the interviews. And since this is the first time I have conducted this sort of inquiry, it was very difficult for me to foresee how my theoretical perspectives and their answers would transform into the final analysis.

It is also debatable whether the informants' participation was always entirely voluntary. It was usually first when I met informants face-to-face that they had the opportunity to grasp what it was all about. I then tried to explain the purpose of the interview as best as I could, and I also gave them the opportunity to ask me questions before I started to interview them. Those who then might have decided that they did not want to be a part of the research most likely found it very difficult to reject at that point; further, if already existing informants had arranged the meeting, this must have contributed further to a feeling of obligation on their behalf. This clearly represented an ethical dilemma.

## **Anonymity**

Given the possibly negative consequences from being identified in a research analysis, those who participate are normally provided with an anonymous identity. This is particularly important if the information concerns delicate or controversial topics such as politics or religion. Changing names and altering information about age, profession, place of residence, etc. permit anonymity. The demand of anonymity is not unproblematic: by altering information in order to make the informants unrecognisable, they can also become bereft of their authenticity. If the omitted information is decisive for the results of the study, this will adversely affect the credibility of the entire research (Alver & Øyen 1997:119-120).

In this case it has been a challenge to provide the informants with complete anonymity because some of them are friends, and because people connected to NGOs and, in particular, Muslim organisations, probably are acquainted with each other. What concerns those of my



informants who are friends (as mentioned I applied the “snowball-method”) I don’t consider it to be very problematic if they recognise each other in the text; they probably will do so if they try. This is because, as friends, they are most likely aware of each other’s views. However, I hope I have been able to preserve the informants’ anonymity for others, including people who might know them personally but do not know that they have taken part in this research. To achieve this, I have not given information about their education and profession (except from a few cases), correct age and number of children, etc.

I could of course have chosen not to describe the informants individually at all since I, for the most part, use their statements and experiences to present different opinions and to illustrate tendencies. The reason why I have decided to connect the data with each individual informant is because I identify them with different manners of conceptualising a Muslim identity (“Bosnian Islam” and “global Islam”). In order to find out whether there is any connection between their identity, manner of dressing and their opinions about different religious issues such as the wearing of *hijab* and gender-roles I decided to keep the unity between informant and interview data and refer to names and persons.



### Chapter 3: Bosnian Muslims, past and present

The course of history has provided the Bosnian Muslims with several points of reference for their identity. Bosnian Muslims have a bond with the remaining Muslim world, yet they also belong to the European cultural tradition.<sup>21</sup> Their collective identity is significantly shaped by the relationship they have with the other major national groups that constitute Bosnia: the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats. Developments in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century have made the different groups focus more on their own nation's history at the expense of a common Bosnian history and tradition.<sup>22</sup> As a result of the 1992-1995 war, Bosnian Muslims had special reason to establish their own nation's history and origin: their status as a distinct ethnic/national group with a natural tie to Bosnia was called in question by Serb and Croat nationalist extremists, who attempted to assimilate Bosnian territory into their respective fatherlands.

Religion was and remains a constitutive part of West-Balkan nationalisms (Perica 2002). The link between nation and religious community is so close in Bosnia that people's national and religious identities completely overlap: A Muslim is always a Bosniak, a Catholic Christian a Croat, and an Orthodox Christian is without exception a Serb.<sup>23</sup> For the Muslims this indicates that Islam is not only their religion, it is also a source of their nation's history, tradition and identity. This fusion of nation with religious community has influenced their religious practice and their Muslim identity. However, not all Bosnian Muslims are equally concerned with the Bosnian dimension of their religious identity. Toward the end of this chapter, I will describe the major religious trends present in Bosnia and identify their origin. This presentation will shed light on the different manners my informants relate to Islam and explain why there is disagreement among Bosnian Muslims about the *hijab* issue.

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<sup>21</sup> As Muslims they are naturally excluded from the Christian cultural tradition, which has been, and still is, an important basis for a common European identity.

<sup>22</sup> The authors of "Bosnia and Hercegovina, a tradition betrayed" (Donia & Fine 1994) argue that Bosnia has most of all been characterised by a tradition of tolerance and coexistence and a common Bosnian identity that included all the different ethnic/religious groups in Bosnia. The Bosnian war is understood as a break with this tradition. The authors strongly oppose the widespread understanding that the war was an inevitable result of age-old hatred between the different national groups.

<sup>23</sup> Except from the few cases of religious conversion.

## ***Bosnia, facts and figures***

Bosnia's population is approximately four million. The inhabitants are mainly Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats, whereof the Bosniaks are in majority.<sup>24</sup> Unlike other former Yugoslavian states, each of which has a nationally-dominant religion, Bosnia is divided between Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Christians. Many believe Bosnian religious diversity is an insolvable problem, while others consider the religiously-mixed population to be a treasure and what makes Bosnia the peculiar thing it is: a Muslim-Christian European country.

Bosnia today is a product of the Dayton peace agreement which, in November 1995, ended the war that had ravaged the country since spring 1992, when Bosnia declared independence from the dissolving Yugoslavia. The Dayton agreement acknowledged the outer territorial borders as they existed when Bosnia was a Yugoslav republic. However, the agreement divides the inner territories into two entities: a federation of Bosniaks and Croats, *Federacija*, and a Serb dominated entity, *Republika Srpska* (see map). The government structure is designed to prevent the ascendancy of any of the three national groups; to this end, the head of state is a three-member rotating presidency with one Bosniak, one Bosnian Serb and one Bosnian Croat member. The two entities enjoy a high degree of autonomy and have their own constitutions, governments, legislative assemblies, police forces and court systems (Burkey 2006:2-3). Since 1995, Bosnia has been administered by the Office of the High Representative and a NATO peacekeeping force (SFOR, replaced by the European EUFOR in late 2004).

The three dominant national groups in Bosnia do not only inhabit the same state, they also share a South-Slavic heritage and language<sup>25</sup>. Religion is the primary means of distinguishing between people. However, many Bosnians are not necessarily religious, but lead a secular lifestyle in a cultural environment that is shared by all inhabitants.

Nationalists on all three sides have searched for ethnic divisions in early Slav history that can correspond with their current nationalistic aspirations. This has proved to be a futile project; the only thing that can be said with certainty is that the Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks all

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<sup>24</sup> In the 1991 census *Muslimani* (Bosniaks) made up 43.7 percent of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbs accounted for 31.3 percent and Croats 17.3 percent (Bringa 1995:26).

<sup>25</sup> The language used to be called Serbo-Croatian (*srpskohrvatski/hrvatskosrpski*) from 1960 onwards, but after the division of Yugoslavia it has differentiated into three national-languages: Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian (and with time possibly also a fourth; Montenegrin language). The differences between the three languages mostly concern vocabulary and pronunciation and the use of the Cyrillic alphabet among the Serbs and the Latin alphabet among the Croats and Bosniaks (Mønnesland 2002:24-25).



Map of Bosnia and Herzegovina



descend from the same Slavic base: a people who moved down the Balkan Peninsula in the late 6<sup>th</sup> century (Malcolm 1996:6-8).

### ***The Islamicisation of Bosnia***

When the Ottomans subdued Bosnia in 1463, the inhabitants were Christians. After “the Great Schism” between the Roman and the Orthodox Church in 1054, Bosnia was formally under the jurisdiction of Rome. In reality, though, Bosnia was never won over by either of the competing Churches (Donia & Fine 1994:17).

How a significant portion of Bosnia’s population came to embrace Islam has been the focus of much debate and speculation. Apart from Albania, no other Ottoman-occupied Balkan territory saw so many locals convert to Islam. The existence of a little documented schismatic Bosnian Church is considered a key to understand why and how this happened. Many of the theories about the conversion to Islam and the nature of the Bosnian Church are not well founded; rather, the theories have been – and remain – contributions to a nationalistic discourse concerning which ethnic group has the longest historical continuity in Bosnia (Malcolm 2002:27-29).

Many leading scholars in Bosnia support a theory which claims that the schismatic Bosnian Church was an offshoot of the Bogomils, a Bulgarian heretical movement which preached a Manichean dualist theology. The Bogomil theory has been particularly popular with 20<sup>th</sup> century Bosniaks, who have been accused of being renegades from Catholicism or Orthodoxy. Since the Bogomil-theory depicts the conversion to Islam as a mass-conversion of Bogomils who, for centuries, had endured the persecution of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, the Bosniaks can, according to this theory, claim that their forefathers never were Catholic or Orthodox, but the members of an autonomous Bosnian Bogomil Church. This would mean that the Bosniaks have historical continuity as a distinct group in Bosnia, well beyond the arrival of the Ottoman Turks (Malcolm 2002:27-29).<sup>26</sup>

By examining the Ottoman tax-registers which recorded property ownership and categorised people by their religion, the British historian Malcolm concludes that the conversion to Islam happened gradually, voluntarily, and that members of all three churches – the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the – then nearly extinct Bosnian church –

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<sup>26</sup> Both Fine and Malcolm argue against the Bogomil theory, citing research that proves the theory doubtful. Fine finds it most likely that the Bosnian Church was a Catholic church accused of heresy (Donia & Fine 1994:18-19). Malcolm, on the other hand, convincingly argues that the Bosnian Church was a monastic order based on the rule of St. Basil, the founder of the monastic tradition in Eastern Christianity (Malcolm 2002:34-36).

converted to Islam. The Muslim population also increased because Muslims immigrated to Bosnia, mainly from other Balkan countries. The Muslims first became a majority after approximately 150 years. According to Malcolm, the reason why Bosnia was more receptive to Islam than other Balkan states is due to the religious situation prior to the Ottoman conquest (though not in a Bogomil Church): Since Bosnia had three Churches competing for members, it did not present a united Christian “front”. Moreover, given that none of the three Churches were supported by state policy or a proper system of parish churches and priests, it is logical to conclude that the loyalty of the church members was not particularly strong.

The competition between the Catholic and the Orthodox Church also continued during the Ottoman period. While members of both Churches were becoming Muslims, they also switched allegiance between Catholicism and the Orthodox Church – the latter, which the Ottomans preferred, gaining the greatest number of new members in this period (Malcolm 2002:52-58) (Donia & Fine 1994:39-44).

Malcolm notes that conversion to Islam did not necessarily involve a severe religious transformation. In areas poorly served by priests, Christianity was probably little more than a set of folk practices and ceremonies, he claims. When people converted to Islam, they could continue the same practices, only now in Muslim wrapping. Moreover, many of the folk-religious practices, like believing in the protective powers of amulets (a belief that has survived to the present day) were common for both Muslims and Christians. They also shared many of the same festivals and holy days, like the Orthodox *Jurjevdan* (St. George’s Day).<sup>27</sup> Muslims and Christians also made use of each other’s religious expertise, especially in order to cure diseases<sup>28</sup> (Malcolm 2002:58-59).

## ***Bosnia under the Ottomans***

Apart from its strategic position as a frontier region to the Habsburg Empire, Bosnia was peripheral to the Ottoman government. Bosnians did not have any influence over the

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<sup>27</sup> The Norwegian social anthropologist Tone Bringa, who did research in a central-Bosnian village in the late 1980s, discovered that the village Muslims celebrated *Jurjevdan*, which they considered to be part of their Muslim tradition. She also noticed that the most common form of help Muslims in the village sought in times of personal stress was an amulet with Quranic phrases written by a *hodža* (imam) (Bringa 1995). Also Sorabji, who committed fieldwork in Sarajevo in approximately the same period, mentions that the use of protective amulets was considered an acknowledged Muslim custom (Sorabji 1989:105).

<sup>28</sup> One of my informants told me a story which demonstrates that when in despair, people also today seek religious expertise outside of their own religious community: a Serbian Orthodox young woman became ill with symptoms nobody could explain the cause of. Her Muslim boyfriend suggested that she might be possessed by djinns (spirits, mentioned in the Quran, which can be good or evil and possess humans). The girl was then put in contact with my informant, who brought her to an imam who cured her by reciting prayers from the Quran.



decisions that concerned them, and although some Bosnians reached high positions in the central government through the child-levy, they considered themselves Ottomans. After the conquest, Bosnia was divided into three *sandžaks* (districts). In 1554, Bosnia was upgraded to a province with its own governor, *beglerbeg*, who came to be called *vizier*, appointed by the Sultan (Donia & Fine 1994:45, 48-49).

The governor made Sarajevo his residence and the town blossomed under the rule of Gazi Husrev-beg in the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He built a mosque, a *medresa* (theological school), a library, a hamam (Turkish bath), two hans (inns) and an important *bezistan* (cloth-market). A type of religious-charitable foundation called *vakuf*, was vital to the development of all Ottoman towns. The Gazi-Husrev beg's *vakuf* was the richest of all and existed until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sarajevo's population was almost entirely Muslim by 1530; at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the city also included a number of Christians and a small community of Jews. The city had more than a hundred mosques (Malcolm 2002:67-68) (Donia & Fine 1994:50-52).

The Ottomans categorised people according to religion. The Christian and Jewish religious communities, known as *millets*, were self-governed and organised their own courts and schools. This arrangement provided the religious institutions with important political functions and the local religious authority became leaders in the community. In this way, the Ottoman *millet*-system made religious affiliation into the principal criterion for group membership in Bosnia (1994:82).

It is no doubt that it was advantageous to be a Muslim in Ottoman Bosnia. This left a negative legacy and dislike of Turks and Islam among the Christians, who recall the Ottoman period "the centuries under the Turkish yoke." The Christian and Jewish populations were free to exercise their religion as long as they accepted Muslim rule. However, as non-Muslim subjects they had to pay higher taxes than the Muslims and they were discriminated against in different ways. The Ottoman feudal system ensured that only Muslims could become members of the land-owning elite, while most of the peasants who worked their land were Christians.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman state began a program of reforms which reduced the dominance of Muslims in society, and were naturally opposed by leading Muslims who would lose their local privileges. In order not to alienate Muslim landholders any further, the government did not address the widespread problem of corrupted landholders exploiting their peasants. This, in combination with increased taxation made the situation unbearable and after





▲ The Tsar's Mosque (*Careva džamija*), originating from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is situated by the Miljacka river.

Behind the minaret is one of Sarajevo's famous landmarks, the City Hall (*Gradska Vijećnica*), built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. From 1949 the City Hall held the Public –and University library, containing priceless collections of unique books and scripts. 90 percent of the entire library collection was destroyed in fire caused by a Serb grenade fired in August 1992. ►



◄ The Baščaršija Mosque, originating from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century.



1850 a number of peasant uprisings against local landlords and officials took place (1994:59-64).

It was eventually the Christian peasant uprisings, the last and largest lasting from 1875 to 1878, which brought about the end of Ottoman rule. The Ottoman Empire refused to take the necessary measures to improve the peasants' situation and Serbia and Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1876. The Serbs were defeated, but the year after, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire. The Treaty of Berlin in 1878 gave the Habsburg monarchy the right to "occupy and administer" Bosnia (1994:91-92).

### ***Austro-Hungarian rule, 1878-1914***

The troops of the Habsburg monarchy invaded Bosnia in late July 1878. The Muslims resisted the occupation with armed struggle, but were defeated within three months. Legally speaking, Bosnia remained Ottoman land, and the occupation was only supposed to be temporary. In practice, however, Bosnia became an integrated part of the Habsburg Empire from the outset. In 1908 Austria-Hungary formally annexed Bosnia.

For devout Muslims, a relevant question was: were they allowed to live within a non-Muslim polity? The *ulema* disagreed about whether the Muslims should stay in Bosnia or emigrate. While some found it unacceptable to live in what was now regarded as *dar al-harb* (the abode of war), and emigration to be obligatory, others concluded that since Muslims could still practice their religion and apply Islamic law to personal matters, Bosnia was to be considered *dar al-Islam* (the abode of Islam), and emigration was discouraged since it would only weaken the Muslim community in Bosnia.<sup>29</sup> The *mufti* of Sarajevo issued a *fatwa* calling the Muslims to obey Habsburg military law and participate in the institutions of the new regime in order not to weaken the Muslims' political, social and economic status (Karčić 1999:109-119).

Elsewhere in the Balkans, members of the Muslim elite were normally expelled when Ottoman rule ended. In Bosnia, however, the Austrians recognised much of the existing legal code and the Ottoman landholding system, implementing only small reforms to improve the situation of the peasants. Therefore, the Muslims continued to dominate economic, political and cultural life also after 1878 (Donia & Fine 1994:64, 88).

The new regime sought to modernise Bosnia according to European standards by introducing the Habsburg legal, political, economic and cultural system. They set off

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<sup>29</sup> From 1878 to 1908 around 150.000 Bosnian Muslims migrated to the Ottoman Empire (Karčić 1999:110).

industrialisation and made important changes in communication and transport. The urban population increased and public buildings in Central-European style were erected next to Ottoman-Bosnian architecture. The Austro-Hungarians preserved certain types of traditional Muslim schools, such as *mekteb* (informal religious elementary school) and *medresa* (high school), while they modernised others and also established new schools.

The developments in education caused a split within the Muslim educated class: on the one hand, there were Muslims who graduated from traditional Muslim institutions and continued their studies abroad in Muslim countries; on the other, there were graduates from Austrian schools in Bosnia who headed for universities in Central-Europe. This resulted in development of a Muslim intelligentsia independent from the traditional *ulema* (Karčić 1999:92-95).

In Ottoman time, the highest religious authority of the Bosnian Muslims had been the *shaikh al-Islam* in Istanbul. To separate the Bosnian Muslims from Ottoman influence, the Habsburg administration in 1882 established a Bosnian Islamic institution headed by the *Reis ul-ulema*. The Reis and a council of *ulema* were now responsible for appointing imams, supervising Islamic education and authorising *sharia* judges. The 5.000 *vakufs* that existed in Bosnia came under Habsburg control after the occupation. The Muslims were not satisfied with this arrangement and organised a movement working for religious and cultural autonomy. In 1909 the movement succeeded, and the Austro-Hungarian monarch then gave the Muslims the right to administer their religious affairs, including *vakufs* and religious education (1999:124-132).

When the Habsburg Empire occupied Bosnia, the Catholic and Orthodox Christians of Bosnia came to associate their identity and existence with Croatia and Serbia. To undermine Croatian and Serbian nationalism in Bosnia, the Austrians promoted the concept of *bošnjaštvo* ("Bosnianism"). By romanticising Bosnia's shared cultural traditions and unique history, they hoped to encourage patriotism and loyalty towards Bosnia. However, at this point, separate ethnic identities were firmly established in people's minds and could not easily be replaced by regional patriotism. In 1903, Austrian policies changed: the different groups were now allowed to publish newspapers, to publicly use their ethnic/national names and to form ethnically-based political parties. The Muslim landowners were the first to create a formal political party in 1906, when they established the Muslim National Organisation. Serbian and Croatian nationalists also formed their respective political parties, both with political programs claiming that Bosnia was Serbian/Croatian land and that the Bosnian Muslims were ethnic Serbs/Croats (Donia & Fine 1994).

In the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, Serbia nearly doubled its territory at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, and Serbia was considered an increasing threat by the Habsburg monarchy. The assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, which was committed by Bosnians with ties to the Serbian secret service, caused the Austrians to declare war on Serbia, an event that escalated into the First World War (1994:113-118).

### ***Royal Yugoslavia (1918-1941) and the Second World War***

The end of the First World War was also the end of the Habsburg Empire. Many Serbs, Croats and Slovenes hoped for South Slav unification and many Muslim leaders were also enthusiastic about the idea of a Yugoslav state. The Serbian Prince Regent Alexander established the "Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes" on December 1, 1918. It soon became clear that the Serbs wanted to realise their dream of a Greater Serbia. The outcome was a centralistic and Serb-dominated Yugoslavia characterised by political chaos. In 1929, royal parliamentarianism was replaced by dictatorship as King Alexander proclaimed himself the sole source of all authority in the "Kingdom of Yugoslavia." On October 9, 1934, the king was assassinated by Croatian fascists, *Ustaše*, who worked for the destruction of Yugoslavia and an independent Croatia (Donia & Fine 1994:120-132).

A widely discussed topic among Muslims in this period was female veiling and the role of woman in Islam. Enes Karić (2004) refers to a polemic between Islamic traditionalists and reformists/modernists which took place in the 1920-30s. While conservative *ulama* argued that there was no need for change and that the veiling of women was obligatory according to Islam, the modernising Muslim intelligentsia considered the veil an un-Islamic custom and argued for women's participation in society. This view was also held by Reis Čaušević, who spoke out against veiling. This made some of his opponents refer to him as a "Bosnian Kemal Atatürk" (Karić 2004).

When Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria had become allies of Germany and Italy, the Yugoslav government capitulated and signed the Tripartite Pact on March 25, 1941. When military officers who opposed an alliance with Hitler replaced the government in a coup, the Germans decided to invade (Donia & Fine 1994:133-135).

The Second World War in Yugoslavia unfolded as many wars taking place simultaneously: the two major resistance movements not only fought the German and Italian occupiers, they also fought each other. One of the resistance movements, the *Četniks*, was set

up by a Serb, Draža Mihailović, a Yugoslav Army colonel and royalist. The aim of his movement was to restore a Serb-dominated royal Yugoslavia. The Partisan movement, under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito, sought to transform the Yugoslav society according to revolutionary communist ideology. The “Independent state of Croatia” (NDH) launched a war against its Serb population. NDH was a fascist German puppet state led by the Croatian *Ustaša* Ante Pavelić. The state incorporated the territory of Bosnia and was divided into a German and an Italian zone. The genocidal-politic of the *Ustaša*-regime was not only to exterminate the Jews and Gypsies, but also the Serb minority-population. The *Ustaša*-regime tolerated the Muslim population, which they regarded as Croats of the Islamic faith. Throughout the inter-war period, the general political sympathies of the Muslims had been with Zagreb rather than Belgrade. Ante Pavelić, who wanted the Muslims’ benevolent attitudes towards Croatia to continue, guaranteed the Muslims freedom of religion and safety (Malcolm 2002:174-185).

The Bosnian Muslims fought on all sides during the Second World War. However, because of the violence committed by Serbs against Muslim villagers, especially in Herzegovina, Muslims were nevertheless more likely to join *Ustaša* militia than the Serb-dominated resistance forces. The Bosnian imams and muftis were sceptical to the Partisan cause – the creation of an atheistic communist society. However, Muslims also joined Tito’s army. Some Muslims even joined the *Četniks*, while others joined a Muslim SS-division set up in Bosnia by the Germans (2002:186-191).

At least one million people died in Yugoslavia during the Second World War, and according to historians, the majority was probably killed by other Yugoslavs (2002:174). The war resulted in division, hatred and bitterness. Only Tito and the Partisans had the ability to gather people around one cause. This, coupled with the Allies’ support, ensured a Partisan victory in April 1945.

### ***Muslims in a Socialist state***

Socialist Yugoslavia was established as a federation of six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, and two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. The Constitution recognised five Yugoslav *narodi* (nations): Slovenes, Croats, Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians, who had constitutional right to equal political representation. The Bosnian Muslims were initially considered a distinct entity (but not a separate nation), before they obtained *narod*-status in 1968. The Communist Party of



Yugoslavia (CPY (from 1952 the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, LCY)) sought to socialise the economy and strengthen the working class, and in 1945, CPY introduced an agrarian reform that ended the Muslim landlord privilege. In 1948, Stalin expelled Yugoslavia from the Cominform, and Tito and the Communist Party had to spell out a new course independent from the Soviets. The new course, popularly called “Titoism” by Western scholars, entailed non-alignment in foreign affairs and self-management in the domestic economy. Self-management involved creating workers’ councils for factories and enterprises, and decentralisation of economic decisions (Donia & Fine 1994:161-172).

Oppression of religious communities and individuals was a prominent feature of socialist Yugoslavia. There was no room for religion in the official Yugoslav sphere, which included politics, workplaces, the school and the army. The Islamic courts were suppressed in 1946. In 1950, laws were passed that made it illegal to give children religious education, and Muslim women were forbidden to wear the veil. In 1952, the dervish orders were outlawed. Only one Islamic association was permitted, the Islamic Muslim Community (later renamed Islamic Community, IC), which became state-controlled in 1947 (Malcolm 2002:194-195).

Bringa (1995) and Sorabji (1989) point out that women were the chief carriers of a Muslim religious identity during communism. In the village where Bringa performed her fieldwork, women were key performers of religious rituals, and it was considered particularly important that the girls were brought up according to Islam (Bringa 1995:9-10). Sorabji distinguishes between Sarajevo’s residential areas and the secular mixed city centre, which was not a place to display one’s religious identity. The local neighbourhoods, on the other hand, were the realm of women. It was a world apart from the centre, something that was reflected in different styles of dress, behaviour and speech. For instance, in the city centre, Muslims would use the standard greetings *dobar dan* (good-day) and *do viđenja* (good-bye); contrarily, they preferred to say *merhaba* and *alahemanet*<sup>30</sup>, greetings from Turkish Ottoman time, in the neighbourhoods (Sorabji 1989:66-71).

In the late 1950s, the Muslims’ religious conditions improved as Tito realised that the Yugoslav Muslims could serve important functions in the foreign policy. A Muslim background now became beneficial for anyone aspiring to become a diplomat, and members of IC were sent round the world to appear as token Muslims. To not lose the goodwill of Muslim countries, the socialist regime also had to be careful not to openly offend the religious rights of the Muslim population (Malcolm 2002:196-197). In the 1970s, after the Muslims

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<sup>30</sup> Today many Bosnian Muslims use the Arabic greeting “*selam alejkum*” (Bosnian transcription), which is exclusive to Muslims because of its religious signification.

had been granted status as a nation, a *narod* (see below), Islam blossomed: In 1970, IC started to publish its own Islamic newspaper, *Preporod*; and in 1977, the Islamic Theological Faculty was opened in Sarajevo. Muslims were granted more religious liberty also for another reason: almost all the leaders of IC were recruited from Partisan veterans who were loyal to Tito and the regime's socialist policy. While the Catholic and Orthodox Church in Yugoslavia were vehicles of Croat and Serb nationalism throughout the socialist era, IC was the most patriotic Yugoslav religious organisation, supporting the concept of Bosnia as a federated republic within socialist Yugoslavia (Perica 2002 74-78). Leading Muslims argued for the compatibility of Islam and socialism (Islam taught "tolerance and co-existence" just as socialism taught "brotherhood and unity"). Not all Muslims were satisfied with the secular line of IC, but most of them kept quiet until the late 1980s when Yugoslavia liberalised (Moe 1997:82-84).

The organisation *Mladi Muslimani* (Young Muslims) was in opposition to the socialist regime from the outset. Many of the members were arrested and executed in 1946-47 for opposing communist rule, and the organisation was outlawed. One of the arrested was Alija Izetbegović, later to become president of Bosnia. In 1970, Izetbegović outlined his ideology in a document entitled "The Islamic Declaration". This declaration was used against Izetbegović and his companions in a trial in Sarajevo during 1983, when they were sentenced to prison for "hostile and counter-revolutionary acts derived from Muslim nationalism". According to the prosecution, the declaration, which had no reference to Bosnia or Yugoslavia, was a manifesto for the creation of an ethnically pure Muslim Bosnian state (Malcolm 2002:208). Khomeini's revolution in 1979 had alerted people about the explosive force of political Islam, and the Bosnian Muslims were now regularly accused of being aggressive Islamic fundamentalists.

### ***The question of the Bosnian Muslims' national status***

Ever since Bosnia's Catholic and Orthodox population started to see themselves as Croats and Serbs and identify with Croatia and Serbia, respectively, the question of the Bosnian Muslims' national identity has been discussed. The national status of the Bosnian Muslims was still unresolved when socialist Yugoslavia was formed. In the 1948 census, when the Bosnian Muslims were in position to choose between the categories "Muslim Serb", "Muslim Croat" or "Muslim, nationally undeclared", an overwhelming majority registered as "undeclared". In the 1950s, the regime started to promote a spirit of "Yugoslavism", hoping

that the Bosnian Muslims would become bearers of a common Yugoslav identity. In the 1953 census, the category “Yugoslav, nationally undeclared” was introduced, and the category “Muslim, nationally undeclared” was removed. Most Bosnian Muslims chose to register under the new category, but this was hardly an expression of their Yugoslav identity. In the 1960s the official policy began to change and the regime decided to drop the policy of “integral Yugoslavism” and strengthen the republican identities instead. In the 1961 census, the Muslims could register as “ethnic Muslim” and, in 1968 they were finally recognised as a distinct nation. Exactly why this was decided is not clear, but it might have been to counter the Serb dominance in Bosnia by strengthening the position of the Muslims, who were politically under-represented in the republic's communist administration. According to the Yugoslav political system, any governmental body, council, or committee had to be made up of an equal number of representatives from the different *narodi*. This meant that the Bosnian Muslims could represent themselves as a group on equal terms with the Bosnian Serbs and Croats once they were recognised as a Bosnian *narod* (Malcolm 2002:197-201).

Despite the fact that the Muslim nationality had been given the name *Musliman* (Muslim), the Yugoslav state considered this to be an identity based on ethnicity, not religion. Hence, in official discourse, there were two kinds of Muslims: a Muslim in the ethnic/national sense (*Musliman*) and a Muslim in the religious sense (*musliman*). However, in many people's minds, religious and ethnic identities were inextricably linked. Bringa found that in rural Bosnia most people identified themselves according to *nacija* (in stead of *narod*). In the literal sense *nacija* is translated with “nation,” but the villagers understood *nacija* to refer to religious community. This group consciousness based on religious affiliation must be seen in relation to the legacy of the *millet*-system, which made religious identity into a social and cultural identity. The fact that people normally inherited their religious identity also contributed to this (Bringa 1995:20-22).

Since the establishment of a Bosnian Muslim *narod* in 1968, there has been disagreement about what role Islam should play in the construction of national identity. The dominant secular nationalism was challenged from the beginning by a small Islamic movement (represented by Izetbegović) which was more concerned with strengthening the position of Muslims worldwide and considered nationality and ethnicity to be irrelevant for Islam. Between these two extremes one can find the position that Islam was not only fundamental to the origin of a Bosnian Muslim *narod*, but also for its continued existence (Moe 1997:72). Moe and Alibasić (2006) point out that, since the Tito regime recognised the Bosnian Muslims as a nation, a national resurgence has gone hand in hand with a religious

one. These processes accelerated upon the fall of socialism. In 1993, Bosnian Muslim intellectuals decided to change the Muslims' national name into Bosniak (*bošnjak*), a name that would facilitate a distinction between religious and ethnic identity, an understanding which is supported by the ethnically based party *Stranka demokratske akcije* (SDA). SDA was founded by Alija Izetbegović in 1990 and started out as a mass movement for the defence of Muslim interests. Among Muslim voters SDA won the elections in 1990, 1996, 2002 and 2006. However, the leader of IC, Reis Cerić, has on several occasions underlined the connection between nation and religion, and IC insists that Islam is an essential component of the Bosniaks' national identity. This symbiosis of Islam and the Bosniak nation has resulted in an "Islamic secularism" that can appeal to the great majority (Moe & Alibasić 2006:7-9). However, a religiously-defined Bosniak identity remains potentially problematic: Bosniak non-believers are likely to disapprove of the Islamic dimension, while Muslims who focus on Islam as a universal religion most probably resent that Islam has become mixed up in a nationalistic cause.

### ***Bosnia's destruction***

The last years of Yugoslavia were characterised by economic crisis and escalation of chauvinistic nationalisms. The new leader of the Serbian Communists, Slobodan Milošević, managed to get control over four of the eight votes in the federal government. It soon became clear that his final goal was to unite the Serbs of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia. Milošević and the Croatian President Franjo Tuđman met in March 1992 to discuss possible ways of dividing Bosnia. In 1991 Slovenia and Croatia had declared independence from Yugoslavia, which resulted in a brief war in Slovenia and a far worse one in Croatia when the Serb-dominated Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) intervened on behalf of the Serb minority population. The Bosnian government, whose Muslim members rightly feared the consequences of being left in a Yugoslavia under Serbian control, declared independence in March 1992. When the international community recognised Bosnian independence on April 6, the carve-up of Bosnia began. The Serbs declared autonomous provinces. Paramilitaries supported by the JNA immediately began their ethnical cleansing of Bosniaks and Croats in Bosnia (Malcolm 2002).

The war in Bosnia lasted for three and a half years and saw the worst atrocities committed in Europe since 1945. More than 100.000 people died, approximately 75% thereof Bosniaks, and more than two million people were forcibly displaced. Only half of these have



View over Mostar and the famous bridge (*most*) across the Neretva River. The original bridge, built in Ottoman time (1556), was destroyed by Croat artillery on November 9, 1993.



A different side of Mostar. A part of the city is still nearly in ruins after the 1992-1995 war, and buildings like these are a constant reminder of the atrocities which took place.





View over Sarajevo from the Yellow garrison (*Žuta tabija*). Below is the cemetery at Kovači, one of Sarajevo's oldest cemeteries. It was taken out of use in 1878, but had to be re-opened during the Sarajevo-siege, 1992-1995. From then on the cemetery has been called the Šehids' Cemetery (šehid = martyr). Alija Izetbegović was buried there in 2003.



Sarajevo hosted the 1984 Winter Olympic Games. The supporting football fields of the Koševo stadium, the opening site for the 1984 Winter Olympic Games, were turned into a cemetery during the Sarajevo-siege, 1992-1995.

returned to their homes. People were sent to concentration camps, whole villages were massacred and women were systematically raped (Moe 2002:17). Part of the strategy of ethnic cleansing was to target historical, cultural and religious heritage: nearly 1.200 out of a pre-war total of 1.700 mosques were destroyed and damaged (Moe & Alibašić 2006: 2). Serbian nationalistic propaganda claimed that Bosnian Muslim fundamentalists intended to create an Islamic state in Bosnia. Thus, when the fighting started, many Bosnian Serbs were willing to do whatever it took to “defend” themselves.<sup>31</sup> However, Serbs were also represented in the Izetbegović-led wartime government of Bosnia, which represented those who wanted to keep Bosnia intact. Malcolm argues that the war in Bosnia was predominantly an invasion planned and directed from Serbia (Malcolm 2002:236-238).

The military forces of the Bosnian government were totally unprepared, numbering only 3.500 when the Serbs launched their attack in April 1992. The UN had introduced an arms embargo against Yugoslavia in 1991. Since Bosnia has no border with countries other than Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, the embargo disproportionately affected the Bosniaks. Western governments proved incapable to comprehend what was going on in Bosnia. Instead of lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia so that the Bosniaks could exercise their right to self-defence, leading statesmen in the West insisted that more weaponry would only prolong what was considered to be a “civil war” (Malcolm 2002).

The course of events in the Bosnian war is too complex to be properly accounted for here. In retrospect, outsiders agree that the war in Bosnia was not an ethnic civil war resulting from “age-old hatreds,” but a war of aggression initiated by Serbia. The Dayton peace agreement, signed December 14, 1995, ultimately rewarded the claims of those who wanted Bosnia to be divided along ethnic lines.

### ***Current Islamic trends***

The largest Islamic organisation in Bosnia is the Islamic Community (IC). IC is a non-governmental organisation in charge of Islamic affairs, such as maintaining the mosques, educating and employing the imams, organising the pilgrimage and collecting the alms-tax. IC became an all-Yugoslav organisation in Royal Yugoslavia, which it remained until the war-year 1993, when the Bosnian Muslims re-established it as a Bosnian organisation under

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<sup>31</sup> Not all Bosnian Serbs joined the aggressors. When Serb paramilitary forces had surrounded Sarajevo in the beginning of April 1992, Bosnians of all nationalities went out into the streets to demonstrate for Bosnian unity (Malcolm 2002:235).

the leadership of Dr. Mustafa Cerić. Today there exist a range of Muslim organisations in Bosnia, but IC is still the largest and the most important due to its near-monopoly on focal Islamic tasks and functions.

The contemporary Islamic scene in Bosnia is characterised by religious pluralism. IC is no longer the only organisation that can claim to speak on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims, and the “traditional Bosnian Islam” that IC promotes, is not the only orientation among the Muslim leaders within IC. The following presentation of Islamic tendencies in Bosnia is based on an unpublished article by Christian Moe and Ahmet Alibašić called “Current Islamic trends in Bosnia: A critical survey” (revised April 2006) and Christian Moe’s report “The war on terror and Muslim opinion-making in Bosnia” (2005)<sup>32</sup>. Moe and Alibašić divide contemporary Islam in Bosnia into two main tendencies, which they term “mainstream” and “new fringe” (hereafter fringe). While the mainstream Bosnian Islam focuses on the Bosnian Muslim tradition and is influenced by Islamic modernist/reformist thought, the fringe is critical of local customs and modernism, and orientates towards the Arab world. As the term mainstream implies, this category includes the majority of Bosnian Muslims, who see Islam as their cultural tradition and seeks to accommodate Islam to a modern European way of life. The origin of the fringe is associated with Bosnian Muslims who, from the mid-1980s, returned from Islamic studies abroad and became noted for their beards, short trousers and rejection of what they considered to be un-Islamic local customs. After the outbreak of war in 1992, personnel from the Muslim world arrived in Bosnia as volunteer fighters (*mujahedin*), aid workers, missionaries and arms dealers. They brought with them Salafi literature, established missionary centres, and distributed aid to the impoverished population. The biggest donors were probably Saudi Arabia, Iran<sup>33</sup>, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, and Kuwait. The High Saudi Committee for Assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina (HSC) may have been the largest single Islamic donor to Bosnia. HSC translated and mass-distributed some 30 books in Bosnia, mostly by Salafi authors and has rebuilt around 200 mosques and built many new, often huge mosques with cultural centres attached (such as the King Fahd Mosque and Cultural Centre in Sarajevo). It was first in the war-years that Salafi and

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<sup>32</sup> The report is part of the project “Religion and Nationalism in the Western Balkans” and is published in Anne Stensvold (ed.) *Western Balkans: the religious dimension* (2008). However, all my references to this report are to the unpublished version, and I therefore refer to the report as Moe 2005.

<sup>33</sup> Iran has been very active in cultural and academic exchange in Bosnia. However, Iran does not appeal to the fringe, but to mainstream Bosnian Muslim intellectuals. It is unknown how many Bosnian Muslims who have studied in Iran have converted to Shia-Islam. A dozen books with Shia-idology have so far been printed in Bosnia.





▲ A model of King Fahd's Mosque and Cultural Centre (*Kralj Fahd Džamija i Kulturni Centar*). The facilities, concluded in 2000, were built by The High Saudi Committee for assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina (HSC). The model is located inside the cultural centre, in a room displaying models of the different projects HSC has funded in Bosnia.



◀ Interior of King Fahd's Mosque.



Wahhabi ideas surfaced on a wider scale. Most of the foreigners have now been expelled under Western pressures, but the foreign ideology has taken root in some of the local population.

The Bosnian mainstream refers to the fringe as “Arabised”, “Wahhabis” or “Salafis”, a terminology Moe and Alibašić consider misleading. The term Salafi refers to the first Muslim generations, the *al-salaf al-salih*, and applies to two very different groups of Muslims: Salafi can be employed for modernist reformists who seek to rethink Islam by returning to the practice of the “forefathers” and ignoring later Islamic scholarly tradition. The term also refers to Muslims who consider most developments after the first three Muslim generations as reprehensible innovations (*bida*). They therefore reject all Islamic schools of law and are known for interpreting the scripture literally and focusing on individual orthopraxy. Salafis in this sense, which is currently the most common usage of the term, is a culturally defensive and anti-modernist Islamic movement.

Wahhabism started as an 18<sup>th</sup> century Saudi-Arabian puritan-movement. The founder, Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, followed the Hanbali-school of law (Saudi-Arabia’s official law-school), which is considered to be the strictest of the Sunni schools. He attacked Sufism and popular expressions of Islam, and deemed all phenomena that did not have their origin in the Quran or *sunna* as *bida*. The religious regime he introduced can be compared to the Taliban-regime in Afghanistan. Today Wahhabism is the puritan state creed of Saudi-Arabia (Roald 2004). Moe and Alibašić point out that the relationship between Salafis and Wahhabis is disputed. While some consider Wahhabism an early form of Salafism, others emphasise their separate origin. Nevertheless, Bosnian fringe is not Salafi or Wahhabi in any strict sense. Even though they do emphasise a literalist interpretation of the sources and focus much on detailed precepts of Islamic law, especially concerning appearance (men’s short trousers and bushy beards and *niqab* for women), they do not (as the Salafis) disregard later Muslim scholars. They also do not seek to introduce a foreign school of law, notably the Hanbali. Therefore, Moe and Alibašić (2006) argue that the Wahhabi-label should be reserved for those on the fringe who follow the teachings of (Saudi) Wahhabi scholars, and that fringe is the most suitable term for most of them.

A few Islamic scholars who belong to the fringe are employed by the IC, but the fringe has also established separate organisations and publications. The most enduring have been Salafi or Wahhabi associations with foreign funding. There are also mainstream organisations that are independent of IC, such as the Dervish orders (Sufis), the lay activist movement

*Mladi Muslimani* and different women's organisations (some of my informants are active in Muslim women's organisations).

Moe and Alibašić point out that gender relations is an area where there are substantial differences between Bosnian mainstream and fringe. Both mainstream *and* fringe emphasise that women and men are different by nature – that men are meant to be breadwinners while women's primary roles are wives and mothers. However, while the mainstream accept and encourage women's employment, the fringe either allows it – provided the work does not involve being alone with a non-relative male and the work does not come in the way of a woman's primary duties – or argues that women should stay at home unless there is a good reason for them to go out. This view is not upheld at the Islamic faculty, which represents Bosnian mainstream; their classes are gender-mixed, and the students intermingle on most occasions. Concerning women's dress, the fringe is divided: some consider the wearing of *niqab* to be a religious duty, while others hold that both covering and not covering the face finds support in Islam. IC, on the other hand, does not have a dress-policy for its employees apart from the *medresas*, where teachers and pupils are obliged to wear *hijab* (2006:25-26). The mainstream is, in general, very critical towards the use of *niqab*, and some are also dismayed that an increasing number of Bosnian Muslim women wear *hijab*. This plurality within the Islamic scene in Bosnia, with different Islamic scholarly traditions making their influence, explains why there are divergent views on what is proper clothing for Muslim women.

## Chapter 4: Identity and belonging

Some of my informants stressed that they are European. I interpreted this as a wish to underline that they are not only Muslims, but also a part of Europe. Simultaneously they could express ambivalent feelings towards Europe.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes they spoke about themselves as Europeans, other times they talked about Europe as if they were only geographically a part of it. Two of the informants described Bosnia as “a bridge between East and West”; a popular saying that catches the ambivalence related to being both a Muslim and a European people.

### ***Identity, a complex concept***

Identity is a term frequently used in both academia and everyday talk. For most people, identity is probably a puzzle because it seems to refer to different phenomena: identity is something personal and unique, referring to the individual's sense of self and understanding of whom she or he is. At the same time, however, identity also applies to large groups of people, such as nations and religious communities. Identity distinguishes between people – you and me, Bosniak and Serb, Muslim and Christian – and unites people in collectives: e.g. Bosnian Muslims, the Islamic *umma*, Europeans (Jenkins 2004).

Richard Jenkins refers to identity as a meta-concept which makes as much sense individually as collectively. His approach to identity is to consider the individually unique and collectively shared as entangled with each other and parts of the same process. A better term to express how identity works is therefore *identification* (2004:5). Jenkins argues that individual and collective identification only come into being within interaction and they are both produced and reproduced as analogous processes. Therefore theorisation about identification should include the individual and collective in equal measure. The most significant contrast between individual and collective identification is that individual identity emphasises difference (individuality) and collective identity emphasises similarity (shared identity). Nevertheless, both individual and collective identities emerge out of the interplay of similarity and difference (2004:15-16).

An important point in Jenkins' argument is that all identities are socially constructed. How this happens is described as *the internal-external dialectic of identification*. This involves that identity is a synthesis of self-definition and the definitions of us offered by

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<sup>34</sup> Exactly what informants referred to when they said Europe was not always clear. Sometimes it was used as a synonym for the European Union, Western Europe, the powerful European countries which could have interfered in the Bosnian war, but didn't, or it referred to the European, secular and modern way of life.

others. He points out that an identity cannot be taken on before it is validated by significant others, and identification is therefore an encounter between internal and external (2004:18-22). An illustrative example of this is the Bosnian Muslims' struggle to be recognised as a *narod*. Until they were formally recognised as a separate nation (first by the communist regime, then by the international community), the Bosniaks tended to look at themselves as a distinctive group in terms of religious affiliation and ethnicity (*nacija*), but not as a separate nation. At the end of this chapter I will discuss how the universal labelling of Muslims as terrorists has affected the identity of Bosnian Muslims.

A distinction can be made between a collectivity which identifies and defines itself (as a group) and a collectivity which is identified and defined by others (a category) (2004:21). The processes of group identification and categorisation are likely to feed back upon each other: by defining 'us' we are also defining a range of "them", and by saying something about others we are also saying something about ourselves and who we are and are not (2004:79).

Nominal and virtual identity refers to the distinction between the *name* and the *experience* of an identity. Individuals can share the same nominal identity (Muslim), but how they experience this identity will vary (2004:22). Both Western stereotypes and a Muslim literalist interpretation expect the Muslim identity to involve a specific conduct, appearance and way of thinking. In practice, however, people live out their Muslim identity in a range of different ways (as demonstrated by the informants of this thesis). The Muslim identity is per definition a community-based identity. Islam defines the rights and duties of the individual and her/his role within the family and the community of believers. Both provide the individual believer with meaning as well as protection from dangers (Kurtz 1995:110-111). However, the Muslim identity is unavoidably also an individual identity. Due to modern society's stress on individualism and pluralism, Muslims in Europe may very well choose to relate to Islam as individual faith and consider their Muslim identity to be a strictly personal matter.

The categories I have constructed to describe Islam in Bosnia ("secularised/cultural Muslims", "Wahhabis", "Bosnian Islam" and "global Islam", cf. Chapter 1) are in danger of becoming mere stereotypes. On the one hand the different categories illustrate that the nominal identity "Bosnian Muslim" is not a homogenous term. But again, there are also differences among the informants I have placed within the same category. I will return to the issue of categorisation later in this chapter, as I discuss the classification of my informants according to "Bosnian Islam" and "global Islam".

Anthony Giddens (1991) focuses on how the institutions of modernity have created new mechanisms for identity-formation. The contemporary world, which Giddens calls “high” or “late” modernity, is characterised by the separation of time and space (social relations take place across wide spans of time-space) and the disembedding of social institutions (abstract systems separate interaction from the particularities of locales). These processes radicalise and globalise pre-established institutional traits and transform the nature of day-to-day social life (1991:2-3). Another feature at the core of modernity is “institutional reflexivity”, which undermines the certainty of knowledge. A prominent characteristic of modernity is therefore methodological doubt and the existence of multiple sources of authority (1991:20-21).

In late modernity the individual has become a *reflexive project*. In traditional cultures changes in individuals’ lives were shaped by *rites de passage*, and the new identity was clearly staked out. In modern society self-identity has to be explored and constructed reflexively. Giddens defines self-identity as:

...what the individual is conscious ‘of’ in the term of ‘self-consciousness’. Self-identity, in other words, is not something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual’s action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual (1991:52).

Central for the creation and maintenance of self-identity is choice of lifestyle. The small decisions a person makes every day, like what to eat, what to wear, who to spend time with, how to conduct yourself etc., are decisions that constitute a lifestyle. These routinised practices do not only fulfil utilitarian needs; they also “give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity” (1991:81). They concern the very core of self-identity; who we are. In modern society choice of lifestyle has to be made among a diversity of options. A lifestyle is not “handed down”; it has to be “adopted”, and individuals are forced to make an active choice (Giddens 1991:81-82).

So, how can Giddens’ theorisation relate to Muslim women in Sarajevo? As already indicated; there are several ways to be a Muslim woman. Because of globalisation different Islamic authorities are available to Muslims all over the world. Muslims today can choose whether to follow a *fatwa* given by an online *mufti* or listen to the advice of the local *imam*. They can choose whether to base their understanding of Islam on a specific authority, such as a particular Islamic school of law or Islamic scholar, or to interpret the sources themselves. An important question in contemporary Bosnia is “what does it involve to be a Muslim”. While many consider “being a Muslim” as a cultural and religious identity that embraces all

Bosniaks regardless of religious observance, others are concerned with providing the Bosnian Muslim identity with genuine Islamic substance.

In the following chapters I focus on the informants' concrete choices: their decision to wear *hijab* or not, how to wear it, who they associate with, how they behave in their daily lives, and which Islamic norms they follow or ignore. Their preferences on these areas imply a choice of lifestyle. A lifestyle normally follows a certain pattern, involving a cluster of habits and orientations. People are therefore likely to avoid things that are "out of character" with the given lifestyle they are committed to (1991:82). Since most of my informants follow a religious lifestyle, i.e. Islamic norms are decisive for how they live their life, their lifestyle is likely to form a coherent pattern. For example, someone who wears *hijab* is very unlikely to go to the disco Saturday night. A woman's lifestyle is fundamental for the construction of her Muslim identity, hence the relevance of focusing on lifestyle choices.

## ***Religious identity and orientation***

### **Bosnian Muslim identity or Islamic identity?**

Islam provides Bosnian Muslims with "membership" in two symbolic communities; on the one hand a community of Bosnian Muslims based on shared cultural heritage, historical legacy, a set of practices and moral values, and on the other hand a community of Muslims worldwide. The social anthropologist Tone Bringa (1995) found that it was the community of Bosnian Muslims that was the primary identification of people in the village she studied, and that they defined their Muslim identity in contrast to the non Muslim-group, their Catholic neighbours, who they interacted with on a daily basis. This illustrates Jenkins' claim that group identification is constructed in interaction with others (Jenkins 2004:22). Identification with the *umma* was made by the small urban-oriented economic and religious elite, the Islamic establishment. However, Bringa argues that the war made many Bosnian Muslims redefine both the content and function of their Muslim identity, and to identify more than before with the Islamic *umma* (Bringa 1995:197-198).

Sorabji (1989) identified a new religious orientation emerging in Sarajevo and some other Bosnian towns in the late 1980s, which stressed the association of Bosnian Muslims with the outside Muslim world. She refers to them as "the new mystics", an Islamic tendency both literalist and mystically inclined. Their source of inspiration was found in the Arab world (Sorabji 1989:7). While religious and national affiliation was closely linked for most Bosnian



Muslims, for “the new mystics”, being a Muslim was less a matter of nationality than one of personal choice. To be a true Muslim one had to actively choose Islam. For them the two way divide between those who had chosen Islam and therefore were part of the true Islamic community (the umma), and those who had not, was more important than the three way divide between Muslim, Serb and Catholic (1989:186-187).

As I have pointed out earlier, the Bosniaks’ status as a distinct *narod* is recent (as is the Bosniak name), and Islam is an important foundation for the Bosniak national identity. However, it can also be claimed that the Bosnian war has provided the Bosniak identity with further meaning; it is now given who is a Bosniak, and who is not. What is not quite as obvious is whether a Bosniak is a Muslim in the religious sense and what this should involve. Bosnian Muslims must therefore define their Muslim identity. As mentioned in the Chapter 1; my informants put different emphasis on the specific Bosniak dimension of their Muslim identity. Meliha for example, does not connect her Islamic identity (she pointed out that her identity is Islamic, not Muslim) with Bosnia. When I asked her whether she calls herself *bošnjakinja* (Bosniak) or *bosanka* (Bosnian), she hesitated to answer. I then asked if this was important to her. She replied: “Not so much important, we are usually by nationality; my nationality is *bošnjakinja* because they call it like that.” She then said that she likes the country she was born in and that she wants to live in Bosnia, but she is more concerned with her Islamic identity: “My Islamic identity is always the first, and I think that with that identity I can be useful for all, for Bosniaks, for Bosnians, and for any other state I am living in.” As Christian Moe points out, when Islam is understood as a universal religion stressing the unity of all Muslims, it does not agree very well with particularistic identities such as nationality and race. Therefore it is not surprising that not all Bosnian Muslims are at ease with the Muslim identity defined not only a religious but also a national identity (Moe 1997:13).

The young Muslim women in Sweden who Minganti (2007) studied also stressed that their identity was Islamic, and independent of their ethnic and national origins. In stead of joining ethnically/nationally based Muslim organisations (which is not uncommon for ethnic and religious minorities), they were engaged in organisations that focused on the unity of all Muslims, and which aimed to strengthen a universal Islamic identity and consciousness. This distinction between religion and culture is characteristic for the Islamic revival movements. A specific Islamic identity probably appear attractive to the young women also for another reason: as religious and ethnic minorities in Sweden Minganti found that Muslim women were often drawn between the Swedish culture and their own families’ ethnic culture and cultural understanding of Islam (Minganti 2007:137-142).

However, several of my informants take pride in their identity as principally *Bosnian* Muslims. Dženana, for instance, mentioned that the Bosnian Muslims are different from Muslims from the East, something she considers to be positive:

And the only difference is that we understand others, that's the big difference. It is not the difference the way we pray, what we do, the way we live life, that is not the difference. The difference is that we are ready for dialogue.

While Meliha considers her Islamic identity to be all-embracing and always must come first, Ajla sees it very differently. She said that Islam is only a part of her identity, and that it is her education, her name, her origin etc., which first of all give her a distinct identity. Ajla's reflections about identity are more in accordance with how Amin Maalouf understands identity. In an essay called "*Identitet som dreper*"<sup>35</sup> (1999) Maalouf opposes the widespread tendency of simply defining one's identity as Arab, Serb, black or Muslim. According to him, every individual has a unique and complex identity, because a person's identity consists of all the different and at times contrasting elements which have shaped it. He uses himself as an example, and declares that some of the characteristics that apply to him are Arab, Christian, Lebanese, and French. All these specificities do not cause him an identity crisis; rather, they give him his particular identity. A person's identity is not constant; it is shaped and reshaped throughout life, and it also varies in different contexts; depending on the context a person will stress different parts of her/his identity. According to Maalouf people are particularly inclined to emphasise that part of their identity which they feel is threatened. He argues that when the Bosniaks were under attack because of their religious affiliation during the 1992-1995 war, Islam had the potential to become a complete identity. Today, when the Bosniaks are recognised as one of the three nations within Bosnia and can openly practice their religion, other characteristics of people's identities might be just as important as religion (Maalouf 1999:13-22).

Maalouf claims that it is a "sign of the times" to regard one's religious affiliation as the most important and extensive source of identity. He connects this phenomenon with the end of communism, what he calls the crisis of Western society, and in particular globalisation and the dissolution of familiar structures for identity. A religious identity is so appealing to people because it not only satisfies a spiritual need; it is also a universal identity that exceeds ethnic, national and social identities. However, there is not one universal religious identity, he

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<sup>35</sup> I have used a Norwegian version of the book, and all references are to the Norwegian edition. The original version is called *Les identités meurtrières* (1998).

says; instead the religious communities have become “global tribes”. Just like tribal, ethnic and national identities corresponded with conflict-lines in the past, so can a religious identity (when regarded as an all-encompassing identity) be a source of conflict in the future. Maalouf thinks the only solution for humankind is to distinguish between spiritual needs and the need for belonging; between religion and identity (1999:77-85).

## **Bosnian Islam**

“Being Muslim the Bosnian way” (Bringa 1995) describes Islam as it was practiced at the end of the 1980s by Muslims without comprehensive knowledge of the Islamic sources. What they considered Muslim customs was as a symbiosis of Islam and the Bosnian cultural tradition, which may also include Christian customs, Bringa concludes. “Bosnian Islam” in this thesis does not refer to a lack of scriptural religious knowledge. It rather describes the religious ideas and practices of those Moe and Alibašić (2006) name “mainstream”, i.e. Muslims who prefer a modern Islam of the Bosnian tradition. These Muslims put emphasis on the Bosnian cultural context, both as a valuable element in their religious practice and as something that must be taken into consideration in the cases where scriptural Islam and local culture and tradition might disagree. Let me give one example: Bosnians love their own music, and singing is an important part of Balkan culture. Dženana, one of my informants, told me about a rock musician who had converted from Serbian Orthodoxy to Islam. He had complained to his imam that he felt sorry about having to quit playing music to be a good Muslim. The imam had advised him to not give up on music; by being a Muslim and an artist he could rather be a positive role model. Amra, another of my informants disagrees; she thinks that most music is destructive and something that ought to be avoided. Therefore she hardly listens to music, except from religious music without text. Her musical choice is undoubtedly religiously influenced; she mentioned that not all instruments are forbidden in Islam; drums for example, are allowed. Amra also insisted that everybody can manage without music if they just put their minds to it, and mentioned Yusuf Islam (formerly called Cat Stevens), who stopped singing when he converted to Islam, as an example to be followed.<sup>36</sup> Another area where individuals can choose whether or not to take local customs into consideration is in their manner of dressing. This will be examined in the next chapter.

When I asked informants if they use the expression Bosnian Islam, many began their answer by stressing that Islam is one, which is an important Islamic doctrine. Then, when this

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<sup>36</sup> Yusuf Islam has recently started singing again.

undisputable fact was established, many would explain to me that of course there is always a cultural element to how Islam is practiced. Ajla explained it like this:

Culture is different, Islam is the same. (...) Like it or not; we have to separate those two, and we have to know that those two things do mix together. You can't have the same religion in Bosnia, in Saudi-Arabia, in France. If I'm born and raised like this, it's not easy to change. And why should I change? I'm not doing anything wrong.

Ajla does not mind using the term Bosnian Islam. She thinks it has become more common to use this phrase in order to distinguish their local Muslim tradition from Arabic influence. For Emira, Bosnian Islam is a natural phrase, just like Bosnian cooking or Bosnian Music, she said. Islam in Bosnia has some specific qualities, and according to her that gives it a particular value. "What is Islam? Islam has five pillars, that is what is most important. And the other things, the other things we can make, we can organise in different ways in connection with our cultural tradition."

Those who have a more literalist understanding of Islam will not use the term Bosnian Islam, because they consider culture-specific norms and practices as something which can easily be done "at the expense of Islam". Bosnian Islam, no matter what that expression conveys, will for them necessarily involve an element of ignorance of the true Islamic message. Amra, for example, criticises the worldwide tendency to adjust Islam to time and place by saying that "people are always trying, in many nations all over the world, to accommodate God's law to the time they live. Does that mean that God didn't know what is going to happen in 2006?"

## European Islam

Western scholars of religion and sociology have lately started to apply the term "European Islam" in order to describe the religious practice and culture of the European Muslims, which inevitably is (or they think should be) a symbiosis of Muslim and European/Western ways of organising religion and manners of thinking about individual-community relations and the boundaries of religious life (cf. Hunter 2002:271-276). Muslims themselves seem more reluctant to use the term "European Islam", presumably because the formulation contradicts the undisputable oneness of Islam and the *umma*. Tariq Ramadan, the author of the book "To be a European Muslim" (1999) is an exception, and in an article from 2002 titled "Europeanization of Islam or Islamization of Europe?" Ramadan states: "I am a European Muslim, and there is no contradiction in this situation. If one can think of African Islam or

Asian Islam, then why not also think of European Islam?" (Ramadan 2002:210). He claims that this has not yet happened because of fear and ignorance among Muslims of some basic tenets of Islam. In order to be true European Muslims, Europe's Muslims must promote a new culture that fits the new European environment while being respectful to the Islamic values (2002:210-211). The Bosnian Reis and his colleagues chose the formulation "European tradition of Islam", as they in the "Declaration of European Muslims" describe what the European Muslims must strive to develop (Cerić 2005:4). In an interview with the Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* Reis Cerić points out that living in Europe and the West might be the perfect opportunity for the Muslims to adopt a universal Islam. In order for that to happen the Muslims in Europe first have to integrate with each other (*Aftenposten's A-magasin* 2007).

The Bosnian Muslims have become a symbol of European Islam. Xavier Bougarel argues that the religious identity of the Bosnian Muslims and their position in the complex relations between Europe and Islam cannot be properly understood by insisting on the European dimension of Bosnian Islam. The Bosnian Muslims are surely Europeans, just like their Croat and Serb neighbours, but the realities of Bosnian Muslims, such as heterodox practices, rules for peaceful religious coexistence and processes of secularisation, are not unique for the Bosnian Muslims, Bougarel says. Moreover, Bosnian Muslims disagree about an issue that is central for European Islam: the relationship between Islam and Western modernity. Bougarel identifies three dominant trends among Bosnian Muslims: Islam defined as an individual faith, as a common culture, and as a discriminatory political ideology. This contradicts the description of Bosnian Islam as homogenous and particularly European. And because Islam in Bosnia is so firmly linked to the Bosniaks' nationalist project, Bougarel finds it more likely that a European Islam will develop among the new Muslim generations born in Western-Europe. The waning of inherited ethnic and national identities among the new generations facilitates the emergence of a new Muslim community, centred on religious institutions and demands that concern all European Muslims. Bougarel concludes that there are many Islams in Europe, but that a European Islam does not yet exist (Bougarel 2007:96-121).

My informants were not familiar with the term European Islam. Nejra pointed out that the Bosnian Muslims and the Muslims in Western Europe do not know each other. This is because the Muslims in Western Europe mainly are immigrants, and therefore culturally different from the Bosnian Muslims, who in many ways have more in common with the native European population than the immigrated Muslims. Though some informants

emphasised that they are European and that the European context influences on Islam, they did not seem to link their Muslim identity with a community of European Muslims.

### Foreign Islamic influence in Bosnia

To determine whether my informants oriented themselves towards a more universal Islam or treasure their local tradition, I found it useful to ask how they regard the foreign Islamic influence in Bosnia, notably the “Wahhabis”, the use of *niqab*, and the unfamiliar mosques. Many of those who I understand to be in favour of “Bosnian Islam” were very pragmatic and did not want to say anything negative about other Muslims and their way of practising Islam. Instead they embraced diversity, and underlined that there are many ways to be Muslim. It is a dilemma though, that the “Wahhabis” don’t seem willing to accept the way most Bosnian Muslims practice Islam. Enisa considers it problematic that many Muslims think there is only one way to be Muslim. Her opinion is quite opposite: “Islam is very rich, if you are from Iran, from America, or from anywhere, you can be Muslim, in your own way.” When I asked Dženana what she thought about the “Wahhabis” and the use of *niqab*, she was not sure how to answer: “I don’t know what to say, that is very, for me personally, like I said, I don’t mind, I’m not a person who would judge somebody, so I can’t say my way is correct and your is not correct.” But she was also aware of the fact that the “Wahhabis” don’t approve of the way she is Muslim: “In a sense they don’t even like us, they don’t see wider.”

Although not all express their opinions so directly, those who focus on their local Islamic tradition seem to agree that the Arabic Islamic influence is troubling, and not fit for Bosnia. Nermina articulated this view with precision:

Unfortunately there is some strange influence from the Arabic world. (...) In a way I’m unhappy because of this number of people, because they make life difficult for themselves and for others, you know. Because I think we can not copy anybody’s way of life. Especially we can not copy Arabic way of life. Because those people in Arabic world, I think that they don’t understand our way of life, our situation, complete situation. They can respect every Quranic guidance, ok, we have to try to do it in our life, but we are, we have to find some ways, our own way, to respect Quran, to be Muslim, but to respect also the European way of life. We have to find some compromise. The copying is wrong way. Especially it is wrong way to get some influence, to adopt some strange way of life and to change ours. You know, the generations of Bosnians were Muslims, more than 500 of years. (...) We were Muslims and we lived in Islamic way of life. But this way of life was different from the way of life of the Arabians, in Saudi-Arabia, in other countries, in Iran for example. (...) And today, some young men who spent some time in Arabic world, or they were companions to some Arabic young men here during the war, and now they come and say; “anything you have been doing during these 500 years is wrong. You have to be Muslim, but in this way”. The beard, the short pants, it looks very strange here. It is not necessary.

(...)

I would never agree with *niqab* in our condition. I think it is a kind of obstacle for this way of life. For example, you have the ID; you can’t cross the border between two countries without showing your face.

Of course, I would let anyone make his own choice, and I would never attack anyone because of his choice, but I wouldn't ever accept this way of wearing, covering my face.

Some of my informants are more positively inclined towards the Arabic influence. In a conversation I had with Medina and Amra they emphasised that the variations within Islam are minimal, and said that they cannot be negative towards everything that come from one country (Saudi-Arabia); they should accept what is positive. Where *niqab* is concerned, they told me that to cover the face is not only a cultural tradition but a custom which has its origin in Islam. While some religious scholars consider it to be recommended, others don't.

Therefore it is up to the woman herself to choose whether to wear this garment or not.

What mosque people prefer can reflect their religious preferences. The centre of Sarajevo is dotted with small mosques, and ideally every *mahala* (neighbourhood) should have its own mosque. Many of the mosques that were destroyed during the war have been rebuilt, and there have also appeared some new mosques that stand out because of their size and architecture. These are mosques built with foreign funding, such as the Indonesian Istiqlal Mosque and the King Fahd Mosque, which Christian Moe calls "a gathering point for Islamic fringe youths" (Moe 2005:53). The King Fahd Mosque and Cultural Centre came up in some of the conversations. The cultural centre which is attached to the mosque has conference rooms that can be used free of charge, and Medina and Amra utilise these facilities to hold lectures and courses. Amra also prays daily in the King Fahd Mosque. She said that many people think that the cultural centre is Islamic only because it is called King Fahd and connected to the mosque, and that they therefore are sceptical to come there. However, it is a cultural centre like any other, she said, but because of prejudiced journalists many have been given a wrong impression.

When I mentioned to Ajla that I had been in the King Fahd Cultural Centre, she immediately connected this place with the "Wahhabis". She said that if she had children she would never let them attend a language course there, because she could not know if they would be exposed to Wahhabi-ideology before or after the session. Ajla does not like the architecture of the King Fahd Mosque. She finds it is cold, and prefers the small traditional mosques, which she thinks have something warm about them. Ajla said that she knows some people who always go to the small mosques because they know that the "Wahhabis" will not come there.

## Categorisation of informants

Some of my informants are quite easy to identify with either “Bosnian Islam” or “global Islam”. This is because they have strong and precise opinions, which they did not mind sharing with me.<sup>37</sup> A few of the informants I have not been able to categorise adequately. This refers to the fact that people are complex (something which of course is true for all the women I have interviewed). The informants I am unable to categorise seemed to me to on the one hand be in favour of “Bosnian Islam”, and on the other hand to belong to the category “global Islam”. My difficulties with categorising concerns a general problem, namely: which criterion to base categorisation on.

So far I have focused on how the informants conceptualise their Muslim identity, i.e. whether they stress the Bosniak or Islamic dimension of their Muslim identity, whether they deem it is possible to adjust Islam to time and place, and how they feel about foreign Islamic influence in Bosnia. In the following chapters I will focus on dress (modern or conservative) and discuss to what degree their understanding of the Muslim female role and gender relations are inspired by Islam and/or Western feminist ideals. These criteria taken together with my general comprehension of whom they are, form the basis of my categorisation of the informants as either belonging to “Bosnian Islam” or “global Islam”. It should be kept in mind, though, that people often do one thing, say another and think a third, while the interviewer only has access to one or two of these levels (Bringa 1995:xvi).

The category “Bosnian Islam” is applicable to the following informants: Enisa, Emira, Ajla, Nermina, Dženana, Nejra, Elvira, Selma and Edina. The category “global Islam” I find appropriate for: Meliha, Medina, Amra and Azra. Those I am not in position to appropriately categorise are: Fadila, Raifa, Amila, Jasmina and Lejla.

Lejla can function as an example of the difficulty of categorising. Since she wears *niqab* many probably assume that she is a “Wahhabi”. But despite her conservative way of dressing and her insistence on following strict rules of gender-segregation, she also embraces diversity and puts great value on her Bosniak heritage and European belonging. This makes me unable to fit her into one category.

All the women I understand to be in favour of “global Islam” have spent a period of their life in another country. Meliha, Medina and Azra have studied in a Muslim country, while Amra comes from Montenegro. Medina has actually lived most of her life outside of Bosnia, mainly in another European country. She said that she does not really have a connection with Bosnia. This can explain why she does not connect her identity as a Muslim

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<sup>37</sup> For that very same reason these informants are referred to or quoted disproportionately frequent.



with Bosnia. She is not even sure about whether to call herself *bošnjakinja* or *bosanka*; nationality for her is just a designation in her passport. However, to explain why “Bosnian Islam” appeals to some of the informants, and “global Islam” to others, is outside the scope of this thesis (that is a topic for psychology).

### ***Rejecting the terrorist-label***

After the terrorist attacks on 9/11, Bosniaks, regardless of whether they are secular or observant Muslims, tend to feel that they, like Muslims worldwide, are held responsible for atrocities committed by a handful of extremists. Bosnian Muslims condemned the 9/11 attacks, but they are strongly critical to how the “war on terror” has been carried out in Bosnia, with searches, raids, seizures, confiscations, detentions and interrogations. It is the presence of foreign *mujahedin* in the Bosnian war that has connected Bosnia with “Islamic terrorism”. However, no Bosnian Muslim had been implicated in international terrorism when the report “The war on terror and Muslim opinion-Making in Bosnia” was written<sup>38</sup> (Moe 2005:5).

A consequence of the al-Qaida-linked bombings around the world is that the world’s Muslims have been given the unpleasant choice of being with America or being with the terrorists. Moreover, the widespread Muslim perception that the war against terrorism is in fact a war against Muslims has heightened the idea of the Muslim *umma* (2005:14).

Many Muslim people view the United States and American military actions abroad with mistrust. The “war on terror” is by most Muslims understood to be a cover-up for what are the US’s real intentions; increased influence in the Muslim world and access to the Middle-Eastern oil reservoirs. The Bosnian Muslims, on the other hand, have had a positive image of the USA. The US under Bill Clinton’s leadership intervened to stop the genocide against Muslims in Bosnia and to prevent one in Kosovo (2005:11). However, Christian Moe’s report shows that the US-led “war on terror” have changed the unreserved positive attitude the Bosniaks had towards the US (2005:76-82).

The fact that it was the Americans, and not the Europeans who came to their rescue, may contribute to a more restrained relationship towards Europe. For one of my informants,

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<sup>38</sup> The report analyses Muslim mainstream and fringe discourses about the “war on terror” in Bosnian, mainly Islamic, press. Moe found that the discourse has reinforced the image of a hostile non-Muslim bloc attacking Muslims. Since the report was written a couple of Bosniaks have been convicted for terrorism in Sarajevo 2007 (one of them a Swedish citizen of Bosnian origin), and in November 2008 five of “the Algerian six” (see below) were released from Guantánamo.

Ajla, the statement made by an Austrian politician at the beginning of the war; “I will not allow a Muslim country near Austria”, sums it up for her. Ajla has no doubt that the European countries did not help them because of Europe’s prejudices against Muslims. According to Moe this understanding is common among Bosniaks (2005:18).

The Bosniaks see a resemblance between the allegations of Islamic fundamentalism which served as anti-Muslim propaganda before the Bosnian war and the accusations of “Islamic terrorism” after 9/11. Bosnian Muslims are provoked by the eagerness to hunt down alleged Islamic terrorists in Bosnia, while Bosnian Serb war criminals responsible for atrocities in Srebrenica are still not brought to justice. A parallel has been drawn between 9/11 and the Srebrenica massacre, where twice as many people died in one day as in New York. However, while 9/11 led to the universal labelling of Muslims as terrorists, the massacre in Srebrenica was addressed on the level of individual responsibility (war criminals) (2005:41).

Amra connects the media writings about the terror-attacks with her own experiences from Bosnia, and in particular what she referred to as “the Algerian group”:

They found somehow five or six people who are working here in humanitarian organisations and they arrested them. They were never accused by our court, there were no proofs. Listen to this, it started from this news: “Algerian group wanted to bomb American Embassy”, without proof. People consume this news, and they don’t think themselves. Because of this news, the propaganda, they were arrested. The wife of one of them came to me for help. We had to wait for a court-decision, and court-decision was that these people are clean. At the end, the court believes they are innocent, but America wanted them to go to Guantánamo. And the person in government wanted America as partner, to cooperate. There was a demonstration. I was there, to demonstrate and to write an article. My sister was there, she is not covered, there were some other girls there who are not covered, but do you know what was the media report? They had always a group of men with longer beards and women with *niqab* or scarf, but they never showed someone without scarf. And I remember they were saying “*Allahu akhbar*, these are our brothers, we shall protect them, do not let America take them to Guantánamo”, but we were not saying “let’s kill them, let’s bomb them”. We were just sitting there and standing there. Then in the morning the police came, with dogs, one woman was beaten, I was hospitalised, and someone who went through that knows what propaganda really is. They can make the stories the way they want. It was in someone’s interest to make terrorists here in Bosnia. This woman, the wife, Nadia, is represented by an American lawyer who is going against his own government. That shows that America is not black and white. This case shows how we can be manipulated, and that’s why, Evelyn, I doubt everything that is going on.

Moe’s report also refers to the case of “the Algerian six” and his version is in line with Amra’s: despite the Supreme Court’s decision to release the six men they were handed over to American forces and flown to Guantánamo. Moe concludes that this is the most appalling case of human rights violation in Bosnia resulting from the “war on terror” (2005:51-59).

This branding of Muslims as terrorists must necessarily inflict on how the Muslims perceive of themselves. The labelling perspective in sociology of deviance explains how others’ definition of us affects our definition of ourselves: when people are labelled as deviant

within an appropriate institutional setting they come to identify themselves as deviant. By internalising the identity offered to them by others (society, the court system) they are in fact likely to become (or remain) deviant. The labelling model is also relevant in other contexts and for positive as well as negative labels (Jenkins 2004:20-21). The effect of labelling can be internalisation or resistance. Whether we internalise or resist the labels other people put on us depends on which definitions have factual consequences and who we consider as significant others. The sociology of deviance tells us that our identity is not only perceived by others; the others actively construct our identity in terms of categorising and naming, and how they treat us and respond to us (2002:73-76).

Due to how the “war on terror” has been carried out, Muslims tend to feel that the terrorist-label is applied to all of them. This idea can be reinforced or weakened by the concrete interaction of Muslims with non-Muslims. Nermina, for example, thinks that prejudices against Muslims have become more apparent after 9/11. She has noticed that airport staff has become more suspicious: “If you show up as a Muslim you are potential terrorist”. Nermina connects this with the fact that she wears *hijab* and that she is from Bosnia, two features which she thinks add up to the picture of her as a potential threat.

I’m very unhappy because of this. Islam in general, in its’ core, is not a terrorist-religion; it is a religion of peace. (...) But the problem is that most of European people put sign of equality between Islam and terrorism, like a threat to European way of life. But the truth is, the most of Muslim people do not want to force European people to live in our way of life, we just want to have the opportunity to live in our way of life (Nermina).

So, how can the terrorist label affect the identity of Muslims? Do they internalise it as part of their individual/collective identity? Do they come to see themselves as deviant because non-Muslims categorise them as such? The answer to this question is definitely negative. My Muslim informants strongly resist the terrorist-label on behalf of themselves and the entire *umma*. Some also resist it on behalf of Muslims who have committed acts of terrorism, by claiming that the terrorist label is a tool for de-legitimising one’s enemies. To be labelled “Islamic terrorist” certainly counts in the sense it may have severe consequences (such as being arrested and sent to Guantánamo), but the significant others whose definition really counts is the community of co-believers. The “war on terror” contributes to an “us versus them” mentality which implies that the “others”’ definitions can only be resisted. This means that those who are accused of terrorism don’t perceive of themselves as deviants, but as the victims of a war against Islam and all Muslims.

According to Moe (2005) is the insistence on the Bosnian Muslims' victimhood and continued victimisation a prominent feature of Bosniak discourse which can be linked to the "war on terror". However, this rhetoric has its roots in the Bosnian history and especially the 1992-1995 war, but is reinforced by the Bosnian Muslims' identification with Muslims worldwide and the sense that all Muslims are under attack and victims of global violence (Moe 2005:75).

The feeling of being misunderstood and under attack can also result in resistance and determination. Enisa told me that it upsets her that the whole world seems to think that Islam is terrorism, but this can only strengthen her conviction: "You become even stronger if you have a lot of people in the world who think that Islam is something not so good, you become even stronger in your belief."

## Chapter 5: The modest one

The *hijab* is not just a piece of cloth. It has become a symbol with many different meanings attached to it. For non-Muslim Europeans the *hijab* is often understood as a symbol of female oppression, and the wearing of *hijab* among the Muslim minorities in Western-Europe is seen as expressing a lack of integration and internalisation of the values of democracy and gender-equality (Larsen 2004:52). Some consider the *hijab* an emblem of political Islam. It is understood as inexorably linked to the political project of the Islamists and the *hijab*-bearer is thus inevitably seen as an Islamist (Storhaug 2007).<sup>39</sup> For Muslim women, wearing *hijab* represents the fulfilment of a religious duty, but it can also express moral purity, piety, Islamic conformity, protest, resistance and feminism. For many Muslims in Europe, the *hijab* has become the very symbol of Islam and is closely linked to their Muslim identity (Larsen 2004:52). In this chapter and the two subsequent, I will discuss what meaning Muslim women in Sarajevo find in wearing *hijab*.

### ***A short story of the veil***

The veiling of women is a tradition with deep roots in Middle-Eastern societies. In the second millennium B.C., veiling was a sign of social status and modesty; Assyrian law demanded that married women veiled, while female slaves and prostitutes were forbidden to do so. The holy texts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam all refer to the veiling of women. In fact, the New Testament contains the most unambiguous demand that women should cover their hair: according to 1. Corinth 11:6-10, women must cover their heads as a sign of subordination (Vogt 2004:23-24). A strict form of gender-segregation was practiced in the Middle East until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the cities and among the upper classes which could afford the seclusion and veiling of women. The veil was a sign of social prestige. This changed when the practice of veiling became increasingly criticised from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Criticism

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<sup>39</sup> In her book *"Tilslørt. Avslørt. Et oppgjør med norsk naivisme"* (Storhaug 2007) Hege Storhaug argues that today's widely used *hijab* is designed by the Islamists. Her argumentation is based on how "the new veil" evolved, and how it has rapidly spread and ousted many Muslims' traditional garments like the Pakistani *shalwar-khamis*, which is not considered proper Islamic dress by the Islamists. However, Storhaug does not consider the possibility that the widespread use of *hijab* might be connected to the fact that people all over the world dress more similarly today, because of globalisation in general and a much globalised fashion industry. There is no reason why this should not also be valid for Islamic dress. Storhaug also ignores the fact that Muslim women frame their *hijab* individually, with elements from both national culture and Western fashion. Maybe the traditional Islamic clothes are simply regarded as unfashionable by the younger generations? Young women in the West don't wear what their grandmothers did, so why should Muslim women? The *hijab* is functional because it can easily be combined with both traditional and modern clothing.

came from colonial authorities, but also from Muslims who searched for explanations to why the European powers had been able to dominate them. Those Muslims came to view the veil as a symbol – specifically, of the strict gender-segregation and women’s lack of opportunities to education and participation in society – one which helped account for their own societies’ relative underdevelopment. Outside the Arabian Peninsula, the facial-veil, *niqab*, rapidly disappeared in this period and educated women disposed of the *hijab*. Veiling, which earlier was associated with prosperity, had now come to symbolise a lack of enlightenment (Thorbjørnsrud 2004:42-45).

Whereas veiling previously was a phenomenon shared by Christian, Muslim and Jewish women alike, a new type of “veil” exclusive to Islam developed in the Middle East in the 1970s. “The new veil” evolved among female students who sympathised with the new Islamist movements that had an Islamic society as their goal (2004:46). The new Islamic dress hid everything but face and hands and was made out of inexpensive material in discrete colours. A minority also started to wear the traditional *niqab*. By wearing these clothes, the bearer communicated resistance against materialism and the pressure to be fashionable. They wanted to create a more just society – something for which their Islamic dress became symbolic. With time, this variant of the Islamic dress became popular and was no longer necessarily worn out of ideological motives (2004:46-47).

The *hijab* Muslim women wear today is a continuation of what is called “the new veil” in the sense that it does not express the bearer’s cultural and social background. Instead, it communicates a specific Islamic identity that is shared by all members of the *umma* (Minganti 2007:257). The choice of what type of clothes to wear in combination with *hijab* – e.g., wide garments similar to the traditional clothes or modern clothes – reflects what the individual woman considers proper Islamic dress and whether she deems it possible to mix Islam and modern culture. However, the clothes Muslim women wear is not merely based on considerations of what is appropriate: like women all over the world, Muslim women are also inspired by fashion trends and develop individual styles in their manner of dressing. A growing phenomenon is fashion collections for women with *hijab*.

In many Middle-Eastern countries, women’s traditional clothes are now replaced by *hijab* in combination with trousers and a long shirt/tunica. There is a polarisation between this way of dressing, which has become most common, and the traditional clothes. The salafi-trend of conservative clothing and *niqab* is also present, but in minority (Roald 2005:203). The same tendencies can be observed in the West, Bosnia included: while most women combine *hijab* with modern, but still modest, clothing, a smaller number of women wear



Fatima Kadić-Žutić is the designer behind a line of clothes for women called Taj. On the homepage (<http://www.modnistudiotaj.com/aboutus.html>) she explains that the fashion studio was set up to meet a powerful desire and need among Bosnian women to be different and original. The clothes are for "the woman who cares for values and dignity", regardless of whether she wears headscarf. The philosophy seems to be that Muslim women in Europe ideally should combine Islamic norms and modern clothing in their manner of dressing, so that they are not only different from women who slavishly follow the fashion trends, but also different from Muslim women elsewhere: "We have taken this bold step forward so that, as an indigenous European yet Muslim people, we may be



a bridge between East and West in the way we dress, also". The fashion studio was established in 2007, and in 2008 Fatima Kadić-Žutić was the first designer to show models with *hijab* on the catwalk during Sarajevo fashion week. The two pictures above show models on the catwalk during Sarajevo fashion week 2008. The picture below is from a fashion show at the Centre for Islamic studies in Zagreb. The woman in the middle is Fatima Kadić-Žutić.





clothes similar to the traditional ones, and a clear minority uses *niqab* and one-coloured, preferably black, clothes that conceal all body-contours.

### ***Interpreting the Islamic sources***

Few of the women I spoke to referred to concrete Quranic verses or *hadiths* (the Prophet's tradition) to explain why they consider it to be obligatory for Muslim women to cover their hair and dress modestly. For the women with *hijab*, this seemed to be an obvious and established truth. There are three Quranic scriptures that emphasise modest dress for women: *surah* 33:59, 24:60 and 24:30-31. *Surah* 24:31-31 is especially conclusive in the ruling all Islamic schools of law agree upon; that Muslim women are obliged to cover their hair (Roald 2005:184-189, Larsen 2004:53-55):

*Surah* 24:30-31

Say to the believers that they should restrain their eyes and guard their modesty. That will be purer for them. Allah is well aware of what they do.

And say to the believing women that they should restrain their eyes, and guard their modesty (virtue), and that they display not their ornaments except what appears of them. And that they draw their veils over their bosoms and display not their ornaments except to their husbands, or their fathers, or their husbands fathers, or their sons, or their husband's sons, or their brothers, or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male domestics who have no natural sexual force, or children who know nothing of women's nakedness. And let them not strike their feet together so as to reveal their hidden ornaments. And repent you all to Allah, O you believers, that you may succeed.

It is the statement "that they draw their veils over their bosoms" that most Muslims interpret as a clear command that Muslim women must cover their hair and upper-body. The explanation for this is that the Arabic word for veil (*khimar*) signifies a piece of cloth that covers a woman's hair (Larsen 2004:54). Medina explained to me that this is the reason why Allah did not mention hair; it was already covered. But, she said, the women had become too free in their way of dressing; the veils hung loosely over their heads without covering their chest properly, and that is why this verse was revealed. Meliha also agrees with this understanding and cited the Prophet-biography to underline how final this rule is: "The day when this rule was revealed, the same day the streets of Medina became black<sup>40</sup>". Her point is that because all the women covered at the same time, we know that this rule is definite. Emira

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<sup>40</sup> The streets became black because all women immediately covered their bare skin with the garments they already had on.

also referred to *surah* 24, but she sees it differently: Because it is not explicitly mentioned that women must cover their hair, she does not consider it to be obligatory. “In short, I don’t think it is so important rule for women”, Emira said. To substantiate her claim, she mentioned *surah* 7:26, specifically, “the best clothes are the clothes of piety”, as a vague guide for how to dress.

Only one place in the Quran is *hijab* (the Arabic word for veil/curtain) mentioned in relation to women:

*Surah* 33:53

O you who believe! Enter not the dwellings of the Prophet for a meal without waiting for the proper time, unless permission be granted you. (...) And when you ask for them (the wives of the Prophet) anything, ask it of them from behind a curtain. (...)

The majority of Islamic scholars understand this verse to refer to the Prophet’s wives exclusively, who have a special status in the Islamic tradition (Roald 2005:186, Larsen 2004:55). Nermina agreed: “It was obligatory only for Prophet’s wife, not for others’ wives, even in his (the Prophet’s) time.”

The Quran does not specify in detail how women should dress. The interpretations of Islamic scholars are therefore based on both the Quran and the Prophet’s *sunna* (*hadiths*). The *hadith* most frequently referred to in this context is the one about Esma, who was the sister of Aisha, the Prophet’s wife. Esma once visited her sister dressed in transparent clothes. The Prophet then said that “when a woman reaches puberty she must only show this”, pointing at the face and hands (Roald 2005:190, Abu Dawud, the chapter about clothing, nr. 3580).

Not all Muslims are equally concerned with the Prophet’s *sunna*, and I will present the divergent views of Meliha and Emira to illustrate this. For Meliha, it is clear that the *hadiths* are necessary to understand the Quranic message: “The Quran can not be understood without the text of *sunna*, it is not clear in the Quran how to cover.” Emira, on the other hand, said that there are some sentences about dressing in the *hadiths*, but the real sentences are in the Quran. She considers the *hadiths* to be authentic and the second source of Islam, but underlined that “these sentences need interpretation, really truly interpretation, and this interpretation must be in connection with this time, this period and this area of the world.” Both Meliha and Emira have undergone religious education and have detailed knowledge about the Islamic sources. Still, only one of them wears *hijab* and considers it to be a religious duty. This difference between their interpretations can be seen in relation to their different understanding of how religion and society should interact. Emira holds the view that wearing *hijab* has lost its original function in modern societies: “I don’t understand that we in this

area, in this part of the world, in this part of Europe, which is bridge between East and West, must be with covered hair.” Meliha’s opinion is quite the opposite: “I see that God’s law can not be adjusted to our societies. We should adjust ourselves to the law of God, not to adjust God’s law to our societies and our way of life.” Her fear is that by “changing God’s law to our wish, we will slowly change it into something else”.

There are two central aspects of faith that concern the wearing of *hijab*: it is a part of the relationship between the individual and God, and it has a regulatory function in society (Larsen 2004:58). All my informants consider the first aspect to be the principal reason for wearing *hijab*. However, not all my informants acknowledge that the *hijab* is intended to regulate male-female relations. Ajla and Nejra hold the opinion that wearing *hijab* only concerns the believer’s relationship with God. Ajla underlined that the only reason why she might some day decide to cover her hair (which she finds unlikely) would be out of the love and respect she has for her religion. Since Ajla understands *hijab* to merely be an act of devotion, I asked her what she thought might have been the reason for this rule when it was first revealed. Did it have any function then? Ajla pointed out that she would have to be in God’s place to know this, but the reason might have been that a lot of bad things happened to women at the Prophet’s time, and that it was considered easier to cover women than to educate men. Nejra, who wears *hijab* and considers it to be obligatory religious practice, also stressed that scarf-wearing only concerns the individual woman’s relationship with God and that women should not cover because of men and their needs.

Van Koningsveld and Shadid classify modest dress for women and *hijab*-wearing as an Islamic core-value (Shadid & van Koningsveld 1995:86), which they define as:

...specific aspects of the Islamic normative system which are of fundamental religious significance to all Muslims, viz. the adherence to the Islamic faith and the performance of the rules related directly or indirectly to the “acts of devotion” (*ibadat*) (1995:77).

Following Shadid and van Koningsveld, I asked those informants who regarded the wearing of *hijab* as obligatory whether they see it as an Islamic core-value. To clarify what I meant, I said “something like the five pillars, a part of *ibadat*”. As expected, the women held different opinions. For Amra, it is clear that covering is a part of *ibadat* and, therefore, an important part of the Islamic faith: “Everything that is *fard* (obligatory) is not a detail, what is not *fard* but only recommended, may be a detail”. Nejra, on the other hand, does not consider *hijab* to be an Islamic core-value. She said that compared to the five pillars, which are valid at all times, the wearing of *hijab* can depend on context. According to her it is a problem that many

Muslims misuse the *hijab* and claim that it is essential for Islam. By making the *hijab* into something more than it really is they contribute to making it compulsory, she said.

This presentation of different opinions show that Muslim women disagree about whether the wearing of *hijab* is obligatory or not, and what is its function in society. Their different views reflect how they relate to the Islamic sources. Most of the women I spoke to are in-line with the conventional Islamic view that a woman should cover her hair and body to preserve her modesty and protect herself, her family and society in general. However, it is also clear that not all Muslim women agree with this interpretation. Many see themselves as capable of interpreting the Islamic sources and drawing their own conclusions.

### ***The importance of your intentions***

The women in Minganti's study often used the expression *niya* (intention) to call attention to the importance of the believer's *conscious* intent regarding religious practice. Every religious ritual should involve the believer's declaration of *niya* and reflections on how the action is a means to fulfil God's will and strengthen the faith. The concept of *niya* distinguishes between what are merely cultural habits and what is conscious religious practice. Another condition that is required for religious actions to be morally valid, is free will; i.e., the conscious choice to practice Islam (Minanti 2007:65-66).

This attitude is reflected in my informants who emphasised that it must be an individual choice whether to wear *hijab* or not. They do not approve of any kind of pressure against women regarding this issue, whether that pressure comes from family, husband or society. (Meliha, who has travelled a lot in the Middle East, said Muslims there are also starting to realise this: "Parents are now becoming aware, they can not force it. By forcing they lose in both sides, because then it is not sincerely between her and God.") Selma told me that the two daughters of Reis Cerić don't wear *hijab*, something she considered to be positive. This is because it shows that the Reis has not put pressure on his daughters regarding this issue, and that he is aware that wearing *hijab* always must be a conscious choice committed by the woman alone.

Nermina is the only woman I talked to who wears *hijab* but would not give a clear yes or no to the question about whether *hijab* is obligatory: "I think it is a question of your intentions", she said. She went on to explain that the Islamic reason why a Muslim woman should cover is to be recognised as a Muslim, to avoid inappropriate attention and to not be desirable to other men than her husband. Her point is that, even if she does not cover, she will

still be recognised as a Muslim and she will not risk her marriage, because she dresses decently and has the right intention. She also added that, in a country where all women wear *hijab*, it would be out of the question not to wear it; but in Bosnia, one will be recognised as a Muslim without necessarily wearing *hijab*.

My informants with *hijab* stressed that the *hijab* does not mean that they are better than the women who don't wear it. However, since many of these women consider the wearing of *hijab* to be a religious duty, to be *fard*, that argument can appear self-contradicting. There is clearly a risk that women without *hijab* can feel morally inferior compared to women who wear it. Fadila expressed this feeling of not being "good enough." She told me that she felt embarrassed when she was out drinking coffee with girlfriends and she was the only one at the table who was not covered. The *hijab* gives a sense of belonging for those who wear it, but it can seem exclusive for those who don't wear it, both Muslims and non-Muslims (cf. Minganti 2007:242).

My informants with *hijab* have close female family members and friends who are not covered. It would obviously be difficult to maintain good relations if the women with *hijab* regarded themselves as superior Muslims. The logic of *niya* – that is, believers' true intentions are more important than the external manifestations of Islam (though inner conviction and outer practice ideally should come together) – facilitates a benevolent attitude towards those who are not so strict in religious practice. That they all are aware of the difficulties of wearing *hijab*, and that one has to be strong to wear it, also contributes to this positive attitude. As Enisa said: "I don't understand that topic (of *hijab*) so rigid. If it is hard to wear that because of your job-situation, you can still be a good Muslim", even though she herself wears it because she understands it to be obligatory. She also believes that the Muslim women who don't wear *hijab* will at some point in time put it on, they just don't have the strength yet: "It will happen between her and God some day." Besides, the women with *hijab* have often made the decision to cover after a long period of contemplating. Naturally they cannot so easily judge those who have not yet come to the same decision.

Nermina expressed doubts about whether all women with *hijab* really have the right intention but, at the same time, she emphasised the importance of not judging:

I respect some Muslim women who don't wear *hijab*; they are hard-working, raise their children very well, contribute to the society-life very much. I appreciate them (more) than some other girls who wear *hijab*, but do nothing. (...) In one moment wearing *hijab* became very popular. During the war and after the war a lot of girls started wearing *hijab*. When we are talking about intentions, we mustn't put ourselves in position of judging. That's why I say the reason is between man and God. But when you see someone performing some kind of behaviour, (...) you see the appearance, you see the *hijab* on one side and on the other very inappropriate behaviour, you have to ask yourself, what is going on?

The women in Sweden interviewed by Minganti had formed an ethic around the concept *niya* that enabled them to meet women without *hijab* in a tolerant and respectful manner: 1) the *hijab* is no proof of piety; 2) only God knows what the believer has in her heart, whether she has the intention of submitting to Islam; and 3) because no other human being knows what is in someone's heart, she should leave it up to God to judge (Minganti 2007:242-243). This ethic is descriptive for how my informants relate to women without *hijab* and to people in general who are lax about religious practice, including women who wear *hijab* but "behave as if they don't".

### ***Different ways of dressing***

The Quranic sources do not mention anything about the colour, shape or texture of women's dress. Therefore, Islamic dress has come to involve both cultural and religious aspects. Not surprisingly, different regions have developed their distinct clothes for women (and men). Examples include the Iranian *chador*, a piece of cloth that hangs from the head and is being draped around the body. The *jilbab*, a long coat with a hood, often embroidered, worn with *hijab* and sometimes *niqab*, is widespread in North Africa and the Middle East. On the Arabian Peninsula, women wear a similar garment called *abaya*. The South-Asian *shalwar-khamis*, Pakistan's national-dress, consists of trousers, a long shirt that reaches down to the knees and a shawl that hangs loosely over the head or the shoulders (Larsen 2004:56-57) (Storhaug 2007:20-21).

All the women I interviewed take the Bosnian context into consideration in their choice of dress, although this means completely different things for different women: Emira and Ajla wear modern clothes and consider *hijab* to be unnecessary; Enisa and Dženana find it acceptable and positive to look attractive with *hijab*, combining Islam with modern fashion; Amra and Azra strive not to look attractive, but they nevertheless avoid wearing only black-coloured clothing and *niqab*, which is not very common in Bosnia.

It is interesting that even Lejla, who wears *niqab* and really stands out in the crowd, adjusts to the Bosnian society (Lejla's motives for wearing *niqab* will be accounted for in Chapter 7). When I met her she was dressed in white *hijab* and *niqab*, and a light brown *jilbab*. Lejla covers her face, but she does not identify this feature with Saudi-Arabia:

I wear this kind of *niqab*, in Saudi-Arabia they don't wear this kind of *niqab*. (...)

Maybe you have seen here in Bosnia women who wear only black. (...) But in Islam it is not a demand to only wear black. And maybe women in Bosnia who wear only black think that is Islam, but it is only a custom in Saudi-Arabia.<sup>41</sup>

Meliha told me that God did not explain the details of dressing because he knew that there would be different cultures, different times and different climates. But the general rule is to not be attractive, she explained, and people should try to fit that rule into society: “She can at least maybe try to make it more similar to her culture. Sure she will not wear here the same as in Saudi-Arabia, to cover whole face, to wear only black.”

My informants seemed to agree that women can use the colours they prefer. Meliha referred to a Prophet’s saying to support this view: “It is allowed for men to use any perfumes, and it is allowed for women to use any colours.” However, the point is to not attract attention; therefore, a woman should be careful not to use colours that are very glaring or colours that nobody else wears.

What a woman understands to be the Islamic reason for covering is decisive for what kind of clothes she finds suitable. As mentioned earlier, the majority holds that the intention behind *hijab* is to make a woman less attractive, but exactly how “unattractive” a woman must be to fulfil the ideal of modesty is a matter of interpretation. Amra and Enisa represent two dominant trends in Islamic clothing. While Amra represents an “arabising trend,” where women in Europe have started to combine *hijab* with *jilbab* (Larsen 2004:62), Enisa wears what can be called “*hijab-fashion*”.

In Amra's view, it is obvious that the purpose of covering is to make a woman less attractive when she goes out, and the clothes she herself wears reflect this. The four times I met her, she wore *jilbab*, and her *hijab* covered her neck completely and hung loosely over her upper-body. The colours were mellow – grey-blue or brown, for example. She did not wear make-up. Amra made it clear that she does not approve of those who want to look attractive with *hijab*:

As you mentioned, in Sarajevo you have different ways of covering. And I don’t consider it proper covering if someone covers her hair and have make-up, completely, perfume, and her shoes are high-heeled, and the way of walk and talk and everything. (...) These kinds of girls, I think they are not just sure what they want. They like being religious, they like being modern, they like being like anyone else. I don’t approve of that, I don’t think it is right, since these verses are clear, because covering is about being less attractive, not more attractive.

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<sup>41</sup> My translation from Bosnian: *Ja nosim ovakav nikab, u Saudijskoj Arabiji ne nose ovakav nikab. (...) Možda si vidjela ovdje u Bosni, žene nose samo crno. (...) Ali u Islamu to nije naredno da bude samo crno. I možda žene u Bosni koje nose nikab može samo crno, misli da je to Islama, ali je to običaj samo u Saudijskoj Arabiji.*

Enisa understands it differently. According to her, it is positive to look a little bit attractive with *marama* and to blend into society, because a woman with a headscarf nonetheless stands out and the attention she receives is simply another form of attraction. “You don’t have to look like invisible person”, Enisa said, and explained that the scarf brings out the woman’s personality. I met Enisa three times and her outfits were always matching, layer on layer, with cute details like a row of small diamonds across the forehead or beautiful hair-pins attached to the fabric. She made it clear that she prefers the middle-way, “not too big, not too tight”:

My little daughter, she is very beautiful, and if she chooses to wear *marama*, at some young age, maybe 15-17, I think that it will be very good for her to wear modern clothes, not modern bad, you know, it is very big topic if you say modern. Anything what other children her age is wearing, but if you have tight pants you have to have something (wider and longer, like a tunica) on top, but I think it is easier. If you have a child at 15 who has to wear mantle... I don’t want to wear mantle, I’m 34 and I don’t want to. I want to wear everything women my age wear, and I compare my religion and I find some middle-way. But also, I think that if you choose to wear scarf on your head you have to watch not to wear so tight clothes, not to wear so tiny clothes, and I think that is important to.

The young Muslim women Minganti interviewed in Sweden dressed similarly to Enisa. They strived to wear clothes that were within the borders of decency from an Islamic point of view but, at the same time, to look fresh and nice, which is an important ideal in Swedish society. They would, for the most part, tie their *hijabs* in a *correct* manner, hiding the hair, neck and shoulders, and wear long sleeves and long dresses; but at the same time, they could wear all sorts of colours, make-up and accessories, and do their best to create a matching and beautiful outfit. There were norms, though, and if one of them had put on too much make-up, she might face a negative reaction from the others. In general, they found it acceptable to look nice as long as the intention was to feel good, and not to attract the opposite sex (Minganti 2007:252-258).

Regardless of their different considerations about proper clothing styles for Muslim women in Bosnia, both Amra and Enisa are convinced that female hair is so attractive that it should be covered. My argument that female hair is so normal in the West that nobody even notices it was not convincing to them:

For me as a woman it is so normal to wear scarf because I understand hair to be part of our body, our physical appearance and something that is attractive. And why do we go to hairdresser, to be more attractive. Why do we change our hairstyle? To feel better and to look better. When we feel better we look better (Amra).



Hair is decoration of women. In Islam hair is same like your breasts. All is decoration of you. You have to cover your decoration (Enisa).

### ***Hijab and identity***

It is an acknowledged fact that human beings express their identity through their dress, appearance and demeanour. Giddens points out that while bodily appearance in pre-modern cultures mostly designated social identity, in late modernity appearance has come to increasingly express personal identity and the body plays a crucial part in the reflexive construction of the self (Giddens 1991:99-100). Also Jenkins stresses the importance of the body in identification:

The human body is simultaneously a referent of individual continuity, an index of collective similarity and differentiation, and a canvas upon which identification can play. Identification in isolation from embodiment is unimaginable (Jenkins 2004:19).

Modern culture places great value on individuality vis-à-vis appearance and clothes. Appearance involves physical traits (slim, fat, fit, etc.), tan, bodily adornment (make-up, tattoos and body-piercing) and hair-style/colour. All these features are open to cultivation, and we can, so to speak, create our own body (Giddens 1991:100). The consumer culture and mass production of clothes and accessories for every season, allows people to create their individual styles and “express themselves,” while they at the same time follow the dominant trends.

While the aim of modern fashion is to express individuality and emphasise people’s most attractive features, women’s Islamic dress seeks to do the opposite. The purpose of *hijab* and wide clothes in neutral colours is to avoid attracting attention to a woman’s physical attributes. This, it is reasonable to assume, provides Muslim women with fewer possibilities to express their personal identity. In conversation with some of the informants I came to realise that Muslim women try to differentiate between personal identity and appearance. Medina, who wears clothes that don’t draw attention to her looks, emphasised human beings’ dual nature: “We are not only body, a machine, we are spirit as well.” She thinks that her dress helps to remind her that her real self is the spirit inside:

My body is me, I need by body as a vehicle, but it is not me. And when I talk to people, with my dressing I want to tell them; “my dressing is not important, my body is not important”.

Because of the “*hijab*-fashion” trend, also Muslim women express their individual styles and personalities through their dress. However, some Muslims consider this inappropriate and see it as a negative result of modernity’s influence on Islam. Instead of seeing *hijab* as a means of expressing individual identity, they regard it as closely linked to a collective Islamic identity. This is particularly evident if we consider the black *chador* which Khomeini made obligatory for Iranian women or the pale blue *burqa* which was forced upon all women during the Taliban-regime in Afghanistan. Besides expressing an Islamic identity, these clothes symbolise a particular ideology and group identity.

Women’s appearance, dress and behaviour are often used as symbolic identity-markers for the groups they belong to, whether that is family, ethnic and/or religious group and nation. This is found in connection with patriarchal societies and is probably connected to women’s biology; giving birth and rearing children gives women the main responsibility for socialising children into members of the group (Thorbjørnsrud 2004:37). In modern Western societies Muslim women have come to symbolise a moral boundary against “Western immorality” (Larsen 2004:58). The *hijab*, which is linked to morality and important Islamic virtues, has thus become a key symbol of Islam: Women are considered the “face of Islam”, and their dignity is linked to the dignity of the *umma*.

Since Islam is the foundation of Bosniak national identity, it is not unlikely that the *hijab* is or can become an important symbol of Bosnian Muslim identity (or, alternatively, the fact that most Bosnian Muslim women don’t wear *hijab* can symbolise Islam in Bosnia). In socialist Yugoslavia the image of a girl in a headscarf praying often decorated the walls of Muslim households. This picture symbolised the Bosnian Muslims’ Islamic identity. Bringa claims that women had a pivotal role in the construction and maintenance of a collective Muslim identity anchored in Islam (Bringa 1995:8-10).

Because Muslim women increasingly are in a position to choose whether to wear *hijab* and how to wear it, their clothes are likely to reflect their understanding of Islam. Through their clothes and appearance Bosnian Muslim women can inform others about their values and to what extent they identify with the West (by wearing clothes according to fashion); or with the community of Bosnian Muslims, or whether they identify with the *umma* or the “Wahhabis”. To associate ourselves with a community implies a degree of reflexivity (Jenkins 2004:4). This is particularly evident when there are several communities to choose from. Because of globalisation this is increasingly the reality everywhere. This draws attention to the fact that an Islamic identity is not only a collective identity; it is necessarily also an

individual identity which has to be explored and constructed reflexively, deciding between different options (Giddens 1991).

In a minority situation the *hijab* is likely to be especially significant in the construction of self-identity. The *hijab* does not only stand for a Muslim collective identity, it is also a means to express individual religiosity. Since the wearing of *hijab* is the exception instead of the rule in Bosnia, the decision to wear it is usually made after a long period of reflection. The moment a woman starts to wear *hijab* becomes a crucial moment in her life story (narrative of self-identity). Starting to wear a *hijab* symbolises increased faith, and shows that the woman is a religious person. Those women, who consider wearing *hijab* a religious obligation, see the garment as a fully integrated part of their self-identity: “I would not see myself as a complete believer without it” (Medina). For Muslim women the wearing of *hijab* can be a very personal matter which can be seen as an act of devotion as well as a sign of their intimate relationship with God.

As this discussion of *hijab* and identity demonstrates; identity is necessarily both individual and collective. By wearing *hijab* a woman associates herself with one or several collectives, and distances herself from others. By doing this she constructs her self-identity.



## Chapter 6: The protected one

According to Islamic ideals, men and women should not socialise outside the family and sexual relations should only take place within the heterosexual marriage. This ideal has resulted in the seclusion of women, restricting women to the domestic sphere and the veiling of women whenever they come into contact with unrelated men. Today most Bosnian Muslim women take active part in society and very few women use the veil. Instead they wear *hijab*, and this chapter will examine how the *hijab* can regulate male-female relations.

The Muslim women in Minganti's study in Sweden (2007) were surrounded by norms and regulations concerning their mobility. Ideally, they should not leave home without a male protector, a *mahram*.<sup>42</sup> The aim of this practice, an ideal in many Muslim countries, is to avoid uncontrolled sexuality, which will result in *fitna*, chaos: because women are sexually desirable to men, they have the power to create sexual disorder (Mernissi 1985:30-31). It is the duty of the women's close male relatives to act as protectors and escort them outside the home. In return, they demand obedience from the women and that they ask for permission to perform activities away from home. Minganti's study showed that it was not so much the threat of sexual transgression that upheld this tradition in the young women's families; rather, it was the fear of being associated with shameful acts, places and persons, *guilt by association*, which could lead to gossip and rumours harmful to the women's reputation (and prospects for marriage) – and by extension, their families' reputation and honour. The code of "honour and shame" prevailed in the women's families. This refers to a system where the man's honour is dependent on the behaviour of the other family members. The head of the family is responsible for protecting/controlling "his" women's honour, which is defined by norms for gender, sexuality and reproduction (Minganti 2007:22-23).

The "honour and shame" concept is not part of the Bosnian Muslims' cultural tradition. According to Sorabji (1989), the Bosnian word for shame, *sramota*, is not equivalent to Middle-Eastern concepts of shame. *Sramota* is not linked to a notion of honour but to ideals of morality, and it is not more likely to enter the family through girls than boys. Families are not thought of in terms of honour; therefore, there is no honour to defend on behalf of the family (Sorabji 1989:82-84).

The practice of *mahram* as described by Minganti is not a common phenomenon in Bosnia. Except for Azra, who told me that she could not meet her boyfriend without being

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<sup>42</sup> A *mahram* is one of the male relatives listen in surah 24:31, all men who a woman is not legally in position to marry (Minganti 2007:187).

accompanied by her father and that she was not allowed to associate with unrelated males, my informants did not seem to need anyone's permission for their actions or to report to family members their whereabouts. They are probably familiar with the practice of *mahram* from Arabic countries and they all seemed to recognise that they as women have a greater need for protection than men, but the responsibility to avoid inappropriate situations seems to fall on the individual woman, not her family. Besides, in Bosnia it is the young and devout, rather than the parents' generation which grew up during communism, who insist on following Islamic rules concerning the interaction between unrelated males and females.

Minganti discovered that the *hijab* functioned as an extension of or replacement for the protection of *mahram*. It would be nearly impossible for the women in her study to lead a normal life in a modern society like Sweden and to perform their *dawa*-activity if they could not leave home without being accompanied by a male relative. Thus, women did move about on their own in gender-mixed settings, especially if the male relatives failed to be available as escorts. The women in Minganti's study felt they were capable of controlling the force of *fitna* through self-discipline. By wearing *hijab* they signalled that they are "untouchable" and well aware of the boundaries of decency. Moreover, by wearing *hijab* and toning down their sex appeal, the women did not only protect themselves, but also the men (Minganti 2007:250). This is also the experience of Muslim women in Sarajevo: by wearing *hijab* they can have an active life and, at the same time, observe Islamic norms for gender relations and fulfil important female virtues.

### ***The hijab as a moral boundary***

Since Muslim women who wear *hijab* in Sarajevo are in minority, they are very noticeable. By expressing and displaying their Islamic identity in public they automatically become representatives of Islam, showing Islam's face to the outside world. This gives them a distinctive moral responsibility to adjust their behaviour according to Islamic standards and norms. Muslim women I spoke to, both with and without *hijab*, expressed expectations as to how a woman with *hijab* should behave. These norms apply to women in general, but it is even more crucial for women who cover themselves to follow them. These expectations especially concern the women's conduct in public places: they should not perform any kind of rude behaviour or socialise with males and frequent bars and nightclubs.

It is very inappropriate for decent women to sit at some very bad place, smoking cigarettes, laughing very loudly, walking like a cowboy. When a woman wears *hijab* it is a sign of her religion, conscious of God (Nermina).

In a conversation I had with Edina, Azra and two other girls (one Muslim and one Christian Orthodox), they mentioned a girl at the University who was covered, but who behaved in the same manner as she had done before she got covered: she still associated with males and frequented places that served alcohol. Apparently she had admitted that she was not “truly” covered because she had not said a special prayer the girls understood to be necessary before covering. They agreed that it would be best if the girl in question took off her scarf before she went to those kinds of places, lest she disgrace Islam. Edina, who was thinking about starting to wear a headscarf one day, said that girls like that made her not want to cover, while she found Azra, who wears conservative clothes, practices gender segregation and avoids going to places where alcohol is served, to be a motivational force.

I associated these norms and expectations with social control and questioned whether the women with *hijab* really want to be representatives of Islam in the public, with the moral responsibility that comes with it. I came to realise that the informants with *hijab* are conscious about these norms and expectations and strive to fulfil them. Enisa put it like this: “Yes it is a responsibility, but I don’t mind that responsibility. You are Muslim, you have to watch.” The informants don’t consider the moral responsibility as something negative but as something which helps them to become better Muslims. This attitude is connected with the conscious intention that made them put on *hijab* in the first place: to fulfil an obligation and strive to be better Muslims.

Raifa is 18 years old and not covered. She said the reason is that she does not feel prepared to take on the responsibility: “I thought about that last year, and I was very close to wear *hijab*. I understand that I must be much mature, and I must have some quality which I don’t have now.” To explain what she meant, she said that she loves to sing and dance, and if she wears *hijab* she cannot dance with a man, for example. There are certain things she is not yet ready to reject. Another reason why she hesitates to cover is because of her vivid personality: “I’m very loud, and that makes attraction.” Another of my informants, Amila, objected: “What about it?” She did not consider Raifa’s behaviour to be a problem: “Allah does not tell to us: you must be serious. No! It is normal. It is normal to joke, to ... , it is normal.” Amila said that she used to think like Raifa – that she would put the *hijab* on her head like a “crown” when she had reached a higher level religiously – but after talking to

women with *hijab*, she came to realise that she could cover first and then continue to develop religiously. She therefore covered at the age of 18, and she said that she did not find it difficult at all.

Raifa, who is a very outgoing person, talking and laughing a lot and loudly, thinks that she is lacking qualities that are required for a woman with *hijab*. What she seems to be missing is one of the most feminine of Islamic virtues: *al-haya* (shyness, modesty). However, shyness and modesty are not something the individual either possesses or not; it can be acquired. Mahmood (2005) refers to a woman, Amal, in a women's piety movement in Cairo. She realised that, despite her natural lack of shyness, she could cultivate this virtue. She did not understand this to be hypocrisy, because by acting shy she eventually also came to feel shy on the inside. Another woman, Nama, drew a parallel to the *hijab*: women normally feel uncomfortable when they start wearing *hijab*, but by wearing it they learn to feel shy without it. The wearing of *hijab*, which involves both dress code (wearing modest clothes) and conduct (acting modest), is therefore not primarily a sign of piety and modesty, but a means to accomplish these virtues (Mahmood 2005:155-158) (Minganti 2007:233). Amila could encourage Raifa to cover because she believes that she will be able to change more easily after she starts to wear *hijab*. Raifa, on the other hand, is not yet ready to undergo such a change, so she decided against it at that point in time.

The discrepancy between Raifa's behaviour and what she considers the ideal behaviour of a Muslim woman relates to what Susan Starr Sered refers to as the distinction between women as agents and Woman as symbol. Women as agents, i.e. real women, can demand rights, enter into negotiations and protest unfair treatment. Contrarily, "Woman" is the ideal woman as portrayed in religious traditions:

Woman—a symbolic construct conflating gender, sex, sexuality, and comprised of allegory, ideology, metaphor, fantasy, and (at least in male-dominated religions) men's psychological projections. Although Woman may have little grounding in the real experiences of women, in religious interactions these two ontologically distinct categories tend to be conflated (Sered 1999:194).

Sered argues that the tension between women and Woman is particularly strong in religious gender conflicts because these conflicts are ultimately conflicts over symbols. Religious symbols are so difficult to change because the divine legitimises them. The religious and cultural understanding of Woman has implications for the lives of real women, but women can also to some extent shape the image of Woman, according to Sered. Women's access to social and economic resources expands their prospects for agency and influence over cultural images of Woman (Sered 1999: 194-196). When Amila so strongly rejected the idea of the



Muslim Woman as a timid person who ideally should not be heard or noticed, she sought to shape the image of Woman (the Islamic ideal) based on her own opinions and experiences of what Muslim women are like. Since Amila addressed her protests more to me than to Raifa (because I had asked Raifa if she would have to change her personality to wear *hijab*), I think she also wanted to challenge what she understood to be the Western stereotype of the Muslim Woman (as symbol), which differs from the lives of real Muslim women.

Many Europeans question the usefulness of wearing *hijab* in Western countries because, ironically, the *hijab* itself draws attention. As a result, *hijab*-wearing women may receive more attention than women who do not wear it. This paradox is probably the reason why many Muslim women in the West choose not to cover. Besides, many experience that they can be good Muslim women without *hijab* (cf. Nermina and what she says about the importance of having the right intention). However, the experiences of Medina, Dženana and Nejra all illustrate that the *hijab* has a purpose also in Bosnia where women with *hijab* are a minority. Medina told me that she understands her way of dressing to be multifunctional, and one of the functions is that it reminds her of her obligations as a woman, mother and wife:

Woman is the pillar of society. If women.. I always say that women are carrying the world on their backs, because they are giving birth to children, they are raising children, they are emotionally connected to all people in the world, because without women we would not have birth. Somehow, all women are connected to all people in the world, emotionally through this kind of relationship. And somehow it gives, I'm talking now personally, it gives strength, it reminds us that we have a task to fulfil. I don't know, maybe if I would not be covered, maybe I would come to some path of temptation.

For Medina the scarf works as both protection and guidance. She said that most probably men will not make a move on her when they see that she is covered, and neither will she: "I will not make a move, because it reminds me of my creator. It will remind me that I'm responsible for my children, for my husband, I'm a pillar of society".

Dženana said that she has noticed a big difference in the way men behave towards her after she started to wear *marama*. "This kind of dressing is stopping them a little," she said, referring to the possibility that men are afraid to talk to women in *hijab* since her marital status is uncertain and, of course, if she is married, men know she is not allowed to have any kind of relationship with another man. Dženana really appreciates how she is being treated as a woman with *marama*, but she also underlined that all women should be treated with respect no matter how they dress:

Like my sister in law, she doesn't wear *hijab*, she is married, she is faithful to my brother, and in the streets it would be very very bad if somebody would make a difference between me and her. That's what we can't accept also, in Islam, that's not like, I said before; she is not less worthy than I am.

Nejra has also experienced that people are more considerate towards her after she covered. She told me that they are a little bit more careful with what they are saying to her. For example, they will not make rude jokes and improper comments in her presence. I wondered if this behaviour would not make her feel overprotected, but she does not consider it to be negative. She was amused as she told me that, when she goes to Belgrade, people ask her what cafés they can take her to because they think she cannot go to places where they serve alcohol. However, unlike Azra, Nejra does not consider it a problem for her to go to places where people drink alcohol.

To sum up: the *hijab* functions as a moral boundary because the women who were it are aware of the expectations of others. The *hijab* reminds them of their religious duties as Muslim women, and men do not easily approach to flirt with women who are covered.

### ***The threat of rape and individual responsibility***

My informants emphasised that they felt safe and protected wearing *hijab*. The *hijab* is an important part of their identity as Muslim women, an identity which provides them with confidence. But they also believe that the way they dress can actually protect them from sexual harassment and rape:

Really I feel that I'm safe like this, because I'm not a reason to anybody to make a problem, I'm not reason. At least from my side, he will not be a problem. I will not speak to him with the sentences which will attract him, will not look to him like that, will not show to him anything of my body what is not allowed to see, and then he will not have a reason. After that, if he still is like that, that means that he is sick, and that is his problem (Meliha).

The widespread belief that women can protect themselves by covering their bodies, and the Islamic directive to dress modestly, implies that Muslim women are given a moral responsibility to dress in a way that will diminish their sexual attractiveness. And if they fail to do so, they must take some responsibility for what might happen. While Meliha's remark implies this, Dženana expressed this view more explicitly:

Maybe you will go in miniskirt and ten out of twenty men will not even notice you. But maybe you will pass by some lunatic or maniac, people who are not very healthy, you know, and the reason, that's why it is very important, for example in Islam it says: "you are responsible for your actions". If a person goes naked in the street, that person is responsible for what is going to happen. You are responsible for that part of you life.

When I asked Amila and Raifa whether a woman in a miniskirt is to blame if she is attacked, they first said “yes”, but then they modified their answers:

We only want to say that that (the wearing of miniskirt) was the first step. You know, she was like that, and he, he is really, *on je pravi krivac* (translation: he is the real culprit), we all agree about that (Amila).

Men have passion for women and we can't change that. When God said: everything good that happens to us is from God, everything bad is our fault (Raifa).

Amila used the metaphor of a cake to explain the connection between women's clothing and men's behaviour: when we see a cake we are tempted to eat it. If the cake is covered we don't know what it is like so we are not so easily tempted.

Ajla, on the other hand, does not recognise that the *hijab* has the function of protecting women. She strongly disagrees with the widespread belief that *hijab* and decent dress can protect women from physical assaults:

And most of times they are giving, here, at least in the Bosnia most of times they are giving reasons like: “you see what bad things are happening to the girls on the street, you know, and those things would not happen to her if she was wearing *hijab* and she was dressed properly”, you know, but we have a problem with..., how can you explain all rapes for example in Arabic countries, there is a lot of raping in Arabic countries, and other countries, how do you explain that? So it's easier sometimes I think, for a man, that it is easier to cover the woman from head to her toes, than to educate men not to do what they do.

Ajla considers it a severe problem that women's behaviour and clothing are connected to rape:

What do you have today? You have the same opinions you had a hundred and hundreds of years ago. If a woman reports about a rape, what are they going to ask her? Where it happened, what time was it, what you were wearing. And they are going to try to make the reason for her rape out of all those things, and they are not trying to find the reasons for those things in the man.

(...)

You have years and years and years of the holy Quran, yes you do, but you have the same male opinion about that.

The view Ajla referred to is found all over the world, and not a particular feature of Bosnian society or Muslim culture. However, the impact of feminism, which is strongest in Western societies, has contributed to a change of attitude: it is regarded as irrelevant if a woman is under the influence of alcohol, half-naked and flirting with a man; he must still respect her

boundaries and if he doesn't, he is solely to blame. If a woman is raped she should not be asked about the length of her skirt, because that is considered irrelevant.<sup>43</sup>

Minganti noticed that "the threat of rape" was an ever-present warning in the young women's surroundings, not only as an actual danger, which it certainly is, but also as a means to suppress women's agency and "teach" them fear and helplessness. The tradition of *mahram* presupposes that the world is a dangerous place for women. However, Muslim women in Sweden had had the chance to move around on their own in society and experience that the world out there is, in fact, not so dangerous. Minganti's point is that a dangerous world legitimises a system built on women's need for protection, but this system also makes women think that the world is more dangerous than it really is because the women don't have the chance to experience that they can manage on their own (Minganti 2007:190-192). The threat of rape and sexual harassment can also be used to convince women about why it is important to wear *hijab*: "for their own protection". This was mentioned as an important reason by many of my informants when I asked them to explain the benefits of covering.

I believe there is a risk in encouraging women to dress "decently" in order to avoid sexual harassment and rape. First, it provides women with false security. Second, and most important, if it is a widely held belief that women can prevent these problems by covering their bodies the responsibility is automatically placed on the woman (victim) rather than on the aggressor (male). She will more easily be seen as guilty of dressing indecently according to Islamic standards, and she might be thought of as encouraging sexual harassment and "deserving of it". An in-depth study about sexual harassment in Egypt conducted by the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights substantiates this view. Over 2000 Egyptian women and men and 119 foreign women were interviewed for the survey which concludes that sexual harassment is an overwhelming problem in Egypt: 62% of the men reported perpetrating harassment, while 98% of foreign women and 83% of Egyptian women reported having been sexually harassed. Nearly half of the Egyptian women said this happened on a daily basis

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<sup>43</sup> In Oslo in the summer 2007, several young women were attacked and raped on their way home from town late at night. In the public discourse that followed, some gave women advice like to take taxis home and never walk alone late at night. However, the main focus was not on what the women should do; rather, authorities and journalists focused on the government's responsibility to make society safer and target the men in question. A torchlight procession was arranged under the parole "*Ta natta tilbake*" (translated: Reclaim the night). The message was that Oslo by night is a legitimate arena for women as it is for men. However, chauvinistic and discriminatory attitudes towards women are of course also found in Norway. An article in the Norwegian paper "Aftenposten" (2006) cites a study about the attitudes of jury-members in trials where the defendant is accused of rape. These trials often lead to acquittal because the members of the jury are prejudiced against the female victim. The victim is often met with moral condemnation. Maybe surprisingly; the female members of the jury were much more prejudiced against the victim than the male members (<http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article1578773.ece>).

(Johnston 2008). Responding to these findings, a parliament member stated that, in order to avoid sexual harassment, “Women should dress modestly because there is a big sector of youth who has passed the marriage age, and therefore, some harassment is possible” (Abu El-Komsan 2008: 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph). The Egyptian Centre for Women’s Rights rejects the idea that women’s dress or men’s marital status is the cause for sexual harassment. According to the survey, there is no correlation between harassment and dress: 72,5% of the women in the survey wears *hijab* and some of the harassed women also wear *niqab*. The survey did not show any correlation between men’s marital status and their inclination to harass women (Abu El-Komsan 2008). However, “out of Egyptian women and men interviewed, most believe that women who wear tight clothes deserve to be harassed” (Johnston 2008: 10<sup>th</sup> paragraph).

According to Catherine Bullock, a Canadian convert to Islam and the author of “Rethinking Muslim women and the veil” (2007), the widespread negative perception of *hijab* in the West is the result of a secular feminist discourse which depicts Muslim women as oppressed and the *hijab* as a device which facilitates and symbolises that oppression. Bullock is convinced that the stereotype of Muslim women wearing *hijab* is part of a public rhetoric that seeks to demonise Islam in order to maintain Western global hegemony (Bullock 2007). Recognising that public discourse in the West mostly portrays Islam and the situation for Muslim women in a negative light, I will nevertheless argue that the main reason why many women in the West don’t approve of the *hijab* is firstly because it implies uniformation which contradicts the Western ideal of individualism, and secondly because the Islamic dress code makes a moral distinction between the “Good Woman” and the “Bad Woman” (who “deserves” to be sexually harassed).

Because of the precariousness of the link between women and Woman (that is, the threat that women will shake off Woman), religious ideologies typically include a fallback position for when symbolism of the “good” Woman doesn’t take—for situations in which women do not sufficiently internalize Woman. That fallback position is the “bad” Woman—the demonness, the source of original sin, Lilith, the witch (Sered 1999:195).

A woman who exposes her body; who interacts freely with the opposite sex and engages in sexual relations without being married (a description suitable for the majority of women in the West) is, according to Islam, a “Bad Woman”. Yet, when Muslim women reject the Islamic ideal of Woman, Muslim fundamentalist discourse does not depict this as only the women’s fault, rather, it is a result of Western influence and domination. In this discourse, the West is perceived as the real “demonness” (Sered 1999:202).

In Muslim countries where the majority wears *hijab* and the imperative to do so is very strong, women who choose not to cover undoubtedly run the risk of being labelled “Bad Woman.” In Bosnia, where the majority of women don’t wear *hijab*, the dichotomy between “Good Woman” and “Bad Woman” does not seem to be very prominent. My informants emphasised that you cannot tell who is a good Muslim woman based on what she is wearing, i.e. the *hijab* is not a (absolute) sign of “Good Woman”.

### ***Finding a spouse the Islamic way***

There is a strong imperative for marriage in Islam and marriage is regarded as a principal goal in the lives of women and men. The Prophet’s tradition contains a prohibition against celibacy and the only accepted place for sexual enjoyment is the marriage. Many of the world’s Muslims practice what is called arranged marriages<sup>44</sup>, i.e. the family, the kin group, the cast or clan, is decisive for choosing marital partners. This arrangement implies that marriage is not, first and foremost a contract between two individuals; rather, it is a contract between two groups, which can be families or larger groups. The tradition of arranged marriages is also connected to the gender segregation that pervades Muslim countries, since the only way to find a spouse is through family and friends. The arranged marriage is in contrast to the romantic marriage, a marriage based on the love between two individuals. The romantic marriage is the ideal in Western societies where individualism is an important value (Jacobsen 2002:181-182).

Arranged marriages are not a tradition among Bosnian Muslims. They are like other Europeans and find their marriage partners themselves. Sorabji mentions that in the 1980s, when inter-religious marriages were frequent, most young people in Sarajevo found their spouse at school, college or place of work, or through mutual friends. The parents were not supposed to know about a couple before the marriage was imminent. First cousin marriage was illegal in Yugoslavia, and the Muslims also prohibited marriage with more distant kin (Sorabji 1989). Bringa who studied rural Bosnia in the late 1980s points out that Bosnian Muslims marry within their own ethno-religious group. The norm to only marry other Muslims was particularly prevalent in rural areas. The attitude towards mixed marriages was more liberal in cities.<sup>45</sup> In the village Bringa stayed, there were only three mixed marriages in

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<sup>44</sup> This is not an exclusively Muslim phenomenon, but a practice that is common among different religious and ethnic groups.

<sup>45</sup> Fine claims that 30-40% of urban marriages in Bosnia have been mixed since the Second World War (Donia & Fine 1994:9).

the late 1980s, all consisting of Muslim men married to non-Muslim women. The fact that it was the man who was Muslim is not coincidental since according to Islamic law it is *haram* (forbidden) for a Muslim woman to marry a non-Muslim man, while a Muslim man can marry a non-Muslim woman who belongs to “the people of the book”, i.e. a Christian or Jewish woman<sup>46</sup> (Bringa 1995:149-152). For my informants, this rule clearly applies. However, since they all are religious, and many of them very devout, this is not merely a question of following rules; it also concerns their desire to spend their life and raise their children with someone who shares their faith and values.

Since Bosnian Muslims don’t have arranged marriages and many of my informants uphold the ideal of gender segregation, a relevant question is: How do they find a spouse?

Roald claims it is almost taboo for Muslim teenagers to have a boyfriend/girlfriend (Roald 2005:121). In Bosnia the situation is different, and in Sarajevo you can see young couples where the girl wears *hijab*. Typically they are going for a walk, drinking coffee or sitting on the many benches by the river and in the parks.<sup>47</sup> The general norm seems to be that when a girl is wearing *hijab* the couple cannot be intimate with each other – not even hold hands. How strict a couple chooses to practice this ideal will naturally vary. However, when a girl decides to put on *hijab* she is aware of the existing norms and expectations to how a woman with *hijab* should behave. So, even if it is her choice whether to be intimate with her boyfriend or not, people will most certainly raise an eyebrow if a girl with *hijab* is seen flirting openly or, worse, kissing in public.

Amra is not married, and she pointed out to me that this is somewhat atypical considering her age (late twenties) and the fact that she is devoutly religious. However, because two women in her close family are divorced, Amra wishes to be particularly cautious in her choice of husband. The problem is that there is no way of knowing if a potential husband is a good Muslim just because he “prays five times a day and has a beard and looks serious ... life taught me that that is just an appearance and you never know who that person might be”. Therefore, she tries to find out as much as possible about the potential husbands

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<sup>46</sup> Roald draws attention to the fact that while it is written in the Quran that Muslim women cannot marry pagans, it is not explicitly mentioned that Muslim women cannot marry men from “people of the book”. Roald’s point is that because most Quranic verses are directed towards men, only a few mention women, verse 5:5 which allows Muslim men to marry women from “people of the book”, can also be understood as relating to women, just like the verses concerning food, drink, prayer and the fast, which are directed to men but are nevertheless also understood to be valid for women (Roald 2005:127). IC has taken a stand against all mixed marriages, regardless of whether it is the man or the woman who belong to the “people of the book”.

<sup>47</sup> Ajla told me, to demonstrate how out of the place Wahhabi-ideology is in Bosnia, that a “Wahhabi” had suggested that the benches in the parks should be removed, because young couples are often seen on the benches locked in an embrace kissing.

she meets, like their opinions about polygamy, raising children, the fact that she has a job, her role in society and other things that are important to her. Amra also prays to God in order to find the right husband; she asks him to give her a sign or to lead her in the right direction. And if God has chosen the wrong partner: “I ask him to please change his mind”, she joked.

Before Amra covered, she went to nightclubs and had a boyfriend. That would be unthinkable for her today; she now meets potential husbands through family and friends and has “formal dates,” an arrangement she is very pleased with:

I really love it, because it saves my dignity, and tomorrow I can, for example if I get married, even if I met many men who came to ask, or even if I talk to them about marriage, I can look at them and there is nothing that I am ashamed of.

Amra thinks the best solution is if the young man can visit the girl and meet her parents, so that the date takes place in a family atmosphere (without the parents constantly listening in on them). However, she is also practically inclined: if there is no other possibility, she finds it acceptable to date in public – to meet in a café during daytime, for example. When she was a student and didn’t have her family with her, she had to do that, she said. When I interviewed Jasmina she told me she was going on a blind date that same evening. She had arranged to meet a man outside the mosque after prayer. She told me they would probably go for a walk or something. She didn’t know much about the man but had been put into contact with him through friends.

Enisa, who decided to put on the scarf on her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday, recalled how she had related to her husband before they got married:

We were in some relationship, but in, with *sharia*-orders, you know. (...) The first time I touched my husband was after marriage. It’s beautiful way of life, you know. You have your obligation; you have your conscience about Allah all the time, every time, every second. Allah is seeing what are you doing. And I love Allah. I cannot do that because Allah doesn’t allow it and he hates to do that. I don’t want to do that. It’s way of life. (...) Because of that I married so early, it was my 21<sup>st</sup> year of life. I don’t think that I’ve lost something in my life.

This arrangement was Enisa’s own decision. It was based on her religious conviction and not imposed on her by her family or religious group. In Sarajevo she and other women who practice a form of gender segregation based on Islam, could easily have chosen to associate with men more freely, to go to pubs and nightclubs and to be intimate with a partner before marriage. In Sarajevo many people do so, but they still see themselves as Muslims and are accepted as such (at least by the majority).



Amra was among this group before she chose a strict Muslim life style. She went to nightclubs and had a boyfriend, so she knows what she is talking about. The same is true for Dženana, who went to nightclubs and dressed in miniskirts before she became a practicing Muslim. Minganti (2007) also writes about many of her informants who had a period in their life, often before puberty and before they became practising Muslims, when they dressed in short dresses, listened to hip-hop music and went to the disco with their classmates. Unlike Bosnian Muslims, these girls' socialisation hardly presented this behaviour as an actual possibility, at least not if they were to maintain good relations with their families and ethnic groups. Minganti therefore questions how autonomous their choices really were (Minganti 2007:188-189). I will claim that the choices my informants have made have a high degree of autonomy; they could choose whether to be practicing Muslims or not, and what this should involve. It would be fair to say that most of them have chosen, not the easiest path, but the one with most obstacles.



## Chapter 7: The combative one

So far I have approached the wearing of *hijab* as a sign of the Islamic virtues of modesty and decency, and I have discussed how wearing *hijab* is intertwined with a Muslim female identity and used as a means to regulate male-female relations as well as a way to avoid illegitimate sex. This chapter will focus on *hijab*-wearing as a courageous act of devout women, who are ready to face stigmatisation to accomplish what they see as a religious duty. I will also present the experience of a woman with *niqab*, Lejla, who defies the widespread prejudices and dislike of the *niqab* in Bosnia. Lejla uses the *niqab* in order to develop her piousness and reach a higher religious level. While many in the West assume that the *niqab* is most likely forced upon women, Lejla's story demonstrates that it can be a conscious choice made by the woman herself, even in disagreement with her husband and family. Also, the *hijab* is viewed with scepticism by many non-Muslims, who believe that Muslim women often have no choice but to cover. There is no doubt that many Muslim women are exposed to *hijab* pressure. This was the experience of some of Minganti's informants: when they reached puberty, they were expected to put on *hijab* even if they did not want to (Minganti 2007). By contrast, my informants have not experienced pressure of this kind, rather the opposite. For Bosnian Muslim women, wearing the *hijab* is a means to reclaim their personhood and avoid men regarding them as sexual objects. In this way, wearing *hijab* can be linked to a feminist project, though very few of my informants associated themselves with feminism.

### **Ambassadors for Islam**

Many Muslims in Europe find it difficult to live according to Islam in a secular environment, one which is often sceptical and, sometimes, even hostile towards the visible practice of Islam, of which *hijab* is the most noticeable feature. It is women who are burdened with being visibly recognised as Muslims.<sup>48</sup> Minganti (2007) quotes a young man in an Islamic youth association in Sweden, who calls the women with *hijab* "ambassadors for Islam." He acknowledges that they endure significant discrimination for being Muslim and admits that it is easier for the men because nobody can see that they are Muslims.<sup>49</sup> The young Swedish

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<sup>48</sup> Enisa drew my attention to the fact that you can also notice Muslim men if you look closely. She told me that her husband has a small, nice beard, but added that this was not necessary. The men referred to as "Wahhabis" are an exception; they are very noticeable with their short trousers and unfashionable bushy beards.

<sup>49</sup> In an article in the Islamic newspaper *Salaam* (1992) a Swedish Muslim convert addresses the question of why Muslim men in general don't dress in an "Islamic way". The men she had talked to argued that it was not good for *dawa* if they looked to different (from the rest of the Swedish population), and that they already faced enough

women understood their ambassadorship for Islam as part of their *dawa*-activity. *Dawa* is often associated with text and speech, not clothing and behaviour, which, in fact, is an important part of women's religious contribution (Minganti 2007:231).

At some point in their lives, Bosnian women with *hijab* have made a decision to cover. Many of the women I talked to started wearing *hijab* during the communist regime, a time when this custom was "completely not recognised in Bosnian society at all" according to Meliha, who covered in 1989. Sorabji (1989) writes that Sarajevo's elderly women covered their heads, arms and legs at all times, whereas most young women dressed as "Western" as possible. Looking attractive was highly valued (as it also is today), and wearing the headscarf was not considered attractive for young women. The exception was the women who Sorabji describes as "the new mystics," who had taken to dress in long skirts, long sleeved blouses and headscarves covering all but the face (Sorabji 1989:115).

Meliha, Enisa, Nejra and Nermina all covered in the last part of the 1980s, at the ages of 16 to 19-years. They were young women enrolled in the *medresa* (Islamic high-school) and determined to fulfil their religious duties, even if this meant facing negative reactions from society and, worse, putting their future careers at risk. Nermina told me that even the *medresa* director recommended that the students did not wear *hijab* in those days<sup>50</sup>:

The director, a very nice lady, recommended not to wear *hijab*. When I started to wear *hijab*, I was in fourth degree, and once I went out with *hijab*, a man told me something very bad about Khomeini. It was his way of expressing his disapproval. In these days there were few women who wore *hijab*.

Meliha, who comes from a small town, moved to Sarajevo to attend the *medresa*, where she started to wear *hijab* in her second year. Only four out of thirty students in her class were covered. She described it as very difficult to go outside with *hijab* in Sarajevo in the 1980s because people would stare at her and wonder where she came from. Meliha said that in Sarajevo you could always see some younger women with *hijab*. They were connected to the *medresa* or the Islamic faculty and she would often see them walking by in the old part of town, Baščaršija, but outside of Sarajevo, only older women wore the headscarf. She recalled that, because it was easier to stay in Sarajevo, she only visited home one time each summer and once in the winter.

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discrimination as foreigners if they were not to look like desert-sheikhs as well. The author of the article criticises this attitude because it expresses contempt for the Muslim women, who indeed look different from the majority. She thinks it is only fair that also Muslim men dress in Islamic clothes, and refers to the danger of imitating non-Muslim people to support her opinion from an Islamic point of view (Roald 2005:191-192).

<sup>50</sup> Today it is obligatory for students and teachers at the Gazi husrev-beg *medresa* to wear *hijab*. Teachers who normally don't wear *hijab* still have to use it at work.

Some of the parents were sceptical and feared that their daughters would experience negative consequences because of their choice to wear *hijab*. Enisa remembered that she had been very resolute and would not listen to her parents:

I put my scarf on in 1989 and my parents were against that, very much, and tried to persuade me not to do that: “Maybe later, maybe some more years when you find job, because it is so hard to find job with scarf on your head”.

However, today Enisa’s mother also wears *hijab*. This is the experience of several of the informants: Their mothers were initially negative about their choice, but now, they too are covered. This indicates that the daughters have transferred their religious knowledge to their family. Meliha described it like this:

My family was very traditional family and they really kept with many things from Islam, but like traditionally. They didn’t know why and they didn’t ask themselves, they lived like that. After we (were) brought up, me, my sister and my brother, we somehow made them think more, and we brought books more and we begin to speak and discuss about Islam.

The fact that these mothers followed their daughters’ example must, of course, also be seen in connection to the fact that the mothers grew up during communism. Selma, who is seventy years-old and has lived the most part of her adult life under communism, does not cover her hair. She said that if she were young today, she probably would cover, but when she was young it was difficult, even dangerous to do so. Because she has lived so long without scarf on her head she said it would feel strange to suddenly put it on now. Besides, at her age, it is not considered to be equally necessary, she explained.

Most of the women – both those who wear *hijab* and those who don’t – mentioned that it can be much harder to find work for covered women. They consider this to be an important reason why most Muslim women in Bosnia do not cover. Meliha said that young women who start to wear *hijab* first have to struggle with their own families, claiming that 90% of the families in Bosnia are against *hijab*; then they struggle to be recognised at the University and finally they must fight to get a job: “Even if you get the same chances you always have to be better than others, to prove yourself.”

Amra, who is a journalist and speaks English fluently, said her scarf would prevent her from being employed as a news reader on television – irrespective of her qualifications. This really irritated her: “They seem to think I will start to praise Allah or something.” But for Amra, it is in any case more important to follow God’s law than to give in to prejudices and negative circumstances.

Elvira also works as a journalist, but her experience is different from Amra's. Elvira works in radio and television, and emphasised that she has excellent communication with people and has not had any negative experiences because of her *marama*. She acknowledged that this might be connected to the way she dresses: "This is of course not proper/correct *hijab*, this is more symbolic"<sup>51</sup>, she said. Compared to Amra, who wears wide, single-coloured garments in an attempt to look unattractive, Elvira dresses in modern clothes combined with *hijab*. For her it is important to be practical and combine what is traditional (from Islam) and modern everyday life with all its chores.

The women who cover actually view their *hijab* more as a source of strength than a barrier; by wearing *hijab* they fulfil a religious obligation, so they are certain that God will reward their effort and help them. Enisa, who acknowledges that it can be hard to find a job with *hijab*, said she would still recommend her own daughter to cover: "If you are pleasing God, he will help you to find job, it is very simple."

While the Muslim immigrants in Europe can experience discrimination based on their religion, culture, ethnicity and skin-colour, the Bosnian Muslims are at home. Their identity as Muslims is closely linked to their national identity (though not everyone emphasised this tie). However, because Bosnia is a multi-religious country inhabited by three major national/religious groups, the Bosnian Muslims do not necessarily have to travel far to experience "Islamophobia". Because of the recent war, tensions exist between the different national groups, and the Muslims with *hijab* are especially vulnerable. Amra told me about two incidents in which she had experienced harassment because she wears *hijab*: in a town in Montenegro, two women had raised their voices and exclaimed that they did not understand how some people could dress "like cavemen". Amra realised the statement was directed at her and replied that cavemen didn't wear much, if any clothing; if they were looking for cavemen they would have to look around them, not at her. When Amra was a student she lived in Dobrinja, an area close to Sarajevo airport and the border to *Republika Srpska*. When she wanted to call her family in Montenegro, it was cheaper to cross the border to *Republika Srpska* and use a phone booth there (because then she would not have to pay for a long-distance call). The first time she made this trip whilst covered, she was met with unpleasant reactions. People banged on the windows to a café she visited and a Muslim man exclaimed, "What are you doing here?" (implying that it was not safe). Amra said a male friend had refused to accompany her because he thought it was "like going with a terror bomb." Both

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<sup>51</sup> My translation from Bosnian: *Ovo naravno nije pravi hijab, ovo je više simbolika.*

incidents illustrate that women with *hijab* can be met with negative reactions, but the women I interviewed were prepared to pay the consequences.

### ***Niqab, -an un-Islamic practice or the utmost act of devotion?***

While the *hijab* has become a common sight in European cities, women wearing *niqab* are likely to cause negative reactions. *Niqab* is not considered obligatory by any of my informants. They all find it very impractical, except for Lejla, who covers her face in public. Many stressed that *niqab* prevents you from being useful in society, which they consider to be a very important Islamic duty. In that sense, then, some of my informants have a negative view on *niqab*, some deem it even to be un-Islamic.

Those informants who consider the most important function of the *hijab* is “to avoid being attractive to men other than your husband” can see some utility in the *niqab*. When Amra and I reflected over how the *hijab* attracts attention to a woman’s eyes, which can often be her most beautiful feature, Amra said that this is the reason why some women cover their face; they are so beautiful that it is “not enough” to only hide their hair and body.

Most of my informants were careful not to judge or disdain women with *niqab*. A common attitude was tolerance: if they who are pious women could not accept that someone chooses to be different from the Muslim majority, how can they expect non-Muslims to tolerate their use of *marama*? Even those who consider *niqab* to be something negative for women and society as a whole could still admire the strong faith of the women who are willing to become “nobody” in order to please God. The Swedish women Minganti (2007) interviewed also admired women with *niqab* and looked at them as women who fight their egos by submitting totally to God’s will. They themselves did not want to wear *niqab* because they considered it more important to be a part of society and perform *dawa* (Minganti 2007:258-263).

Since Lejla is the only woman I have interviewed who wears *niqab*, I will attempt to communicate her experience here: Lejla has been wearing *niqab* for ten years. Before she made the decision to wear it, she had been wearing *hijab* for three years. For Lejla, it is obvious that *niqab* has an important function in Islam, both spiritually and socially. However, she does not consider it to be a religious duty. She described *niqab* as “the top of a pyramid”: while *hijab* is obligatory for all Muslim women, the covering of the face is for those who wish to do something extra, to go further, and “be closer to God”. In this way, the *niqab* has a spiritual meaning for those who wear it. Lejla said it was difficult when she first started to

cover her face. It was the right thing to do in a personal sense, but she worried about negative reactions from others. In the beginning, her husband was also sceptical, but Lejla's neighbour, who had studied in Saudi-Arabia, inspired her. Her neighbour said she felt more free with her face covered, and this is also Lejla's experience. She does not like it when men stare at women and make improper remarks; as a woman with *niqab*, she is never exposed to that kind of attention. She also finds *niqab* (and *hijab*) to be very practical when men and women work together since men are often jealous. The *niqab* makes it possible for women to work and be useful in society and at the same time protects their marriage, Lejla explained. At the time I interviewed her, she was running two businesses and opening a third. "I just want to tell people that woman in *niqab* is not only in the house, and that *niqab* is not prison."<sup>52</sup>

As one of relatively few women in Bosnia with *niqab*, Lejla is particularly noticeable in public. She said that a few years ago, people looked at her "as if she had fallen from the sky". But Lejla does not mind being different. Her idea of freedom is that we can all choose what to wear, whether that choice is to wear *marama* and *niqab* or to not wear it. Lejla's point-of-view is that God never intended for us to be the same. He made us different in order to test us; to see if we can all live together and respect each other. As she put it: "I respect your choice, because I respect my choice."

Several of the informants stressed that *niqab* is a part of Arabic tradition – not a part of Islam. Because *niqab* was not common in Bosnia before the 1992-1995 war, it is clear to many that this is a recent phenomenon resulting from Wahhabi-influence. Those critical of the "Wahhabis" also have a negative attitude to *niqab*-wearing. However, several informants pointed out that in Ottoman Bosnia, women did cover their faces; consequently, *niqab* is not a completely new phenomenon. They said that people today are not used to it because it was forbidden during communism, but it is actually a part of their own tradition. Some of them recalled that their great-grandmothers wore *niqab*. Fadila said that her great-grandmother did not wear it all the time, but put it on when she went to the market or into the city. This agrees with what Sorabji writes about the use of *niqab* in Ottoman Bosnia: its primary function was not to segregate women; rather, it helped segregate different ethnic groups (Sorabji 1989: 34, 115).

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<sup>52</sup> My translation from Bosnian: *Samo hoću da kažem ljudima da žena pod nikabom nije samo u kući, i da nikab nije zatvor.*



## ***Refusing to be sexual objects (feminism)***

Feminism is concerned with the problem of objectification of women. Despite the Sexual Revolution and laws which secure formal equality between men and women, the problem has not diminished in modern society. In fact, capitalism and Western consumerism contribute to this problem: when the female body is used in advertising, art, film, pornography, and so on, it is presented in such a way as to satisfy the (heterosexual) male gaze and desire (Bullock 2007). The argument is that women internalise men's desire and judge themselves and each other according to male standards; therefore, the male gaze is decisive for how women perceive themselves. The fashion and beauty industry provide women with an ideal of beauty which only few can live up to, resulting in low self-esteem and devaluation of themselves. In this connection, Bullock (2007) observes that wearing *hijab* is a way for women to reclaim their personhood because, when women wear *hijab*, they no longer satisfy the male gaze – that is, they are no longer sexual objects. *Hijab* and modest clothing also help women to escape the destructive pressure to be fashionable, skinny and beautiful. When women cover, they can no longer be judged by their looks, so covering is a way for women to empower themselves and Bullock concludes that the *hijab* is liberating for women (Bullock 2007:183-187)

That the wearing of *hijab* can transform women from objects to subjects was also the experience of some of my informants:

If I talk with someone, he cannot look at my breasts, first because I cover my breast, and he has to look at my face and think what I'm talking about. He looks at you like person, not like body. (...) I think that it is very common situation that men look at women just like body (Enisa).

Nowadays, especially nowadays, the girls and women they are so cheap to me. Very very low and cheap, because it is like they are selling themselves, like they are objects. And if you are not beautiful like Kate Moss or if you don't have that figure, you are not worthy. And that are values which I don't like. And when you recognise that God created everybody, and that everybody is special., you can find that in religion, you can't find that in everyday life and what they call fashion or whatever (Dženana).

Until Dženana was 23, she dressed in miniskirts and went to nightclubs. She told me that she disliked it when men looked at her and gave her comments like “sexy legs.” After she started to wear *hijab* and cover her body, she receives comments like “you are beautiful,” a compliment she can appreciate. When I said that in my opinion, women who dress sexy and women who cover their hair and body might be part of the same problem – both ways of dressing make women into sexual objects the only difference being that one is an object on display while the other is an object which must be concealed – Dženana reminded me of the difference between men and women: men are generally more passionate than women, she

said. She thinks that this may be the reason why the Prophet told women to cover; men looked at women without respect. But according to Dženana, a true believer should not stare at any woman, regardless of how she is dressed. This would mean that if everybody were true believers, women would not need to wear the headscarf. Dženana's way of dressing - with *hijab* combined with make-up, jewellery and beautiful clothes - may be a good compromise between extremes: "I call myself the middle, in middle, because you will not find a woman from, like I said, the East, who will wear the way I do."

Few of my informants call themselves feminists.<sup>53</sup> The reason may be that they don't agree with the goals of feminism. Instead of seeing man and woman as equals who deserve identical rights and opportunities, they understand man and woman to have different and complementary roles in this life: they are equal only before God (Bullock 2007:58-59). According to Medina, Amra and Dženana this view is supported by modern psychology and science, which inform us about the inborn differences between men and women; e.g., that men and women use different sides of the brain, and that men and women have unequal distribution of hormones. For them this explains why men, and not women, are natural leaders according to Islam. This corresponds with Minganti's (2007) informants who also hesitated to associate themselves with feminism. In the Muslim women's circles, a feminist was considered to be a Muslim woman's complete opposite and a threat to Islamic core values, including sexual morals, family, motherhood and "natural" femininity (Minganti 2007:81-82).

Many Muslims understand feminism to be "Western" and therefore against Islam. Labelling feminism Western, serves to distance Muslim women from feminist ideas. Given that many Western feminists view the combination of Islam and feminism as an anathema, it is not surprising that feminism is an unattractive ideology for Muslims. However, Margot Badran argues that feminism is not a Western phenomenon. The term stems from France in the late 1880s, but since then, feminist ideology has found various expressions in various places around the world. The term "Islamic feminism" appeared in the 1990s and conveys a feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm. The advocates of Islamic feminism believe that the Quran guarantees the equality of women and men, but because patriarchal ideas and practices have impeded or subverted the original message, it is necessary to re-read the Quran from a feminine point-of-view (Badran 2007).

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<sup>53</sup> It is my impression that it is not so common for women to call themselves feminists in Bosnia, as it is in Norway, for example. Feminists seem to be somewhat ridiculed as women who reject their femininity by imitating men. Nirman Moranjik Bamburac is a feminist who teaches feminist literary criticism at the University of Sarajevo. She says that although feminist books came to Bosnia more than two decades ago, feminism remains controversial in the academy as well as the broader society (Badran 2007:93).

Emira is very concerned with the position of Muslim women and criticises the prevalent Islamic understanding of woman, but she will still not call herself a feminist:

Evelyn: But would you call yourself a feminist, a Muslim feminist, or neither?

Emira: I don't think on that way, but I think that place of woman in Islamic world today, in Islamic understanding of woman, isn't good, isn't true. I think Muslims must think a lot about that question. Muslim woman must be the same to man, to have enough school, to be educated, to have the same chance, to have job, must have chance to have freedom, to go for a walk, but I think that she must have in her mind, always to be honest, to be Muslim, to be Muslim woman, to be Muslim wife, to be a good mother. But she must have freedom. (...) She is a person; she is God's person.

Emira is clearly dissatisfied with the role of woman in Islam and recognises that there is a need for change and new interpretations, but she also stressed that it is important for a Muslim woman to be a good mother, wife and a *Muslim* woman (as opposed to a secular woman).

Ajla and Nejra both declared themselves to be feminists. Interestingly, however, Ajla simply calls herself feminist while Nejra identifies herself a Muslim feminist. Nejra told me that this is because she believes that the human rights can be realised within an Islamic framework. She said that while religious and secular feminists in Bosnia cooperate and have common goals, many secular feminists elsewhere in the world have no room for religion within their feminist project. According to Nejra, in Muslim countries, there is an especially great distance between Muslim women and secular feminists. She gave me an example of what it means to be a Muslim feminist in practice: it means that due to her religious conviction, she cannot engage in the fight for the rights of homosexuals.

Ajla had thought about whether or not to call herself a Muslim feminist, but she had come to the conclusion that it is sufficient to apply the term feminist: "Yes I do call myself a feminist, and yes I do call myself a Muslim, but if I call myself Muslim feminist? I don't know if there is need for that." For Ajla there is no contradiction in being Muslim and to fight for equal rights of men and women. Additionally, she added, if someone talks to her, they will soon enough realise that she is a feminist because of her opinions, and that she is a Muslim because she has a typical Muslim name.

Most Western feminists disapprove of the *hijab*, and so do many Muslim feminists (Bullock 2002). Neither Ajla nor Nejra criticise the *hijab* from a feminist point-of-view. The reason seems to be that they disregard certain aspects of this custom: they both stressed that wearing *hijab* only concerns a woman's relationship with God, and that women are not responsible for men's reaction to the way they look. As mentioned previously, Ajla considers wearing *hijab* to be a voluntary religious practice while Nejra understands it as obligatory, though not an Islamic core value.



## Conclusion

To be a Bosnian Muslim woman involves different things for different women. My informants put unequal emphasis on the European/Bosnian and the Islamic dimension of their identities. While some informants identify with the Bosnian Muslim community, others find their source of identity and belonging in the *umma*, the worldwide Muslim community. Some Bosnian Muslims also find inspiration in the Arab world and a particular interpretation of Islam (“Wahhabis”) while others, again, relate to Islam in a secular manner (“secularised/cultural Muslims”). This plurality within the Islamic scene in Bosnia can be seen as a direct result of the Bosnian war, which resulted in foreign Islamic influence in the form of *mujahedin*, Muslim aid-workers, charities and NGO’s. However, it is also a result of globalisation (connecting the local with the global), which has led to the presence of multiple sources of Islamic authority in Bosnia. This indicates that it is not given what it means to be a Bosnian Muslim; Bosnian Muslims must reflexively construct their identity, choosing between different options.

Concerning the relationship between Europe and Islam, a distinction can be made between those informants I identify with “Bosnian Islam” and those I categorise as belonging to “global Islam”: while the “Bosnian Muslims” think that the European context necessarily must influence how they practice their religion, resulting in a symbiosis of Islam and modern society, the “*umma*-Muslims” distinguish between Islam and modern society, which they think should have as little impact as possible on Islam (though they too adjust to the Bosnian reality). However, due to Western-European countries’ passivity during the Bosnian war, the “war on terror” and dominant Western meta-narratives about Islam, (which tend to depict Muslims as adherents of a foreign religion and as enemies to the West), both “Bosnian Muslims” and “*umma*-Muslims” have a somewhat restrained relationship towards Europe and the West. This is especially because the “war on terror” does not distinguish between different Muslims (different ways of being Muslims) and because the universal labelling of Muslims as terrorists affect all Muslims.

By relating my informants to the Islamic female ideal roles – that is, “the modest one,” “the protective one” and “the combative one” – concrete differences between the categories “Bosnian Islam” and “global Islam” become visible. While the “*umma*-Muslims” see wearing *hijab* as an Islamic core-value and a religious duty for Muslim women everywhere, there are a plurality of opinions among those in favour of “Bosnian Islam”: many see it as obligatory; some consider it a religious duty, but underline that wearing *hijab* is not essential for Islam;

and still others think that wearing *hijab* has lost its original meaning and function in modern society. The conventional Islamic understanding is that Muslim women should wear *hijab* to regulate male-female relations and protect themselves, men and society as a whole. Because the *hijab* makes women less attractive, wearing *hijab* is a means to hinder illegitimate sexual relations. The “*umma*-Muslims” agree with this understanding and consequently they wear *hijab* and clothes which don’t attract attention to their physical attributes. Several of the “Bosnian Muslims” also hold this view, while others emphasise that women are not responsible for the response their looks might cause in men. While some of these women don’t wear *hijab*, many wear *hijab* in combination with fashionable modern clothes. They think it is positive to combine Islam and modern society in their manner of dress because they wear *hijab* and are nevertheless identifiable as Muslim women.

Concerning the *hijab* as a means to protect women, all the informants who wear *hijab* consider their clothing to be a moral boundary. On the one hand, the *hijab* reminds them of their duties as Muslim women, but it also functions as a visible boundary for non-related men, who often treat conservatively dressed women more respectfully than women in modern attire. Because of what the *hijab* symbolises and because their physical attributes are not visible for everyone to see, many women believe that wearing *hijab* can protect women from harassment and physical assaults. However, not all informants hold this view. The informants inspired by feminism underlined that there is no correlation between a woman’s dress and the probability that she might be exposed to physical assaults.

The informants who wear *hijab*, regardless of whether they wear it combined with modern or conservative clothing, are likely to experience stigmatisation and negative reactions because of their headgear. This is because they are visible identified as Muslims and because of widespread prejudices against Muslims and the *hijab* in Europe. While Western feminists understand the *hijab* to be a device which distinguishes between “Good Woman” (the woman who wears *hijab*) and “Bad Woman” (the woman who wears modern clothes), my informants consider wearing *hijab* to be liberating. This is because they cannot be judged by their looks when they wear *hijab*, and they escape the “male gaze” by covering their physical attributes. However, none of the informants directly connect the *hijab* with a feminist project. I think this is because wearing *hijab* is, first of all, considered as an act of devotion.

While the “*umma*-Muslims” think that men and women should have different and complementary roles because of their different natures, several of the “Bosnian Muslims” underlined the need for new interpretations concerning Islam and the role of woman.

Although some of those in favour of “Bosnian Islam” are clearly inspired by feminist ideas, feminism did not appeal to the majority of the informants.

The “*umma*-Muslims” have a lot in common with the Swedish Muslim women in *Muslima* (Minganti 2007) in the sense that they all focus on a global Muslim identity, independent of culture, ethnicity and nationality. However, regarding style of dress, Swedish women dressed similarly to some of the women I identify as “Bosnian Muslims”; i.e., in matching outfits in beautiful colours. Minganti argues that the concept of “honour and shame” was prominent in the Swedish Muslim women’s families and ethnic groups, and that the women never detached the *hijab* and their manner of dressing from patriarchal honour ethics (2007:265). None of my informants, whether they identify with “Bosnian Islam” or “global Islam”, connect their *hijab* with patriarchal honour-ethics. In Bosnia wearing *hijab* is an autonomous choice, made by the woman alone – often even in disagreement with her family. The younger generation has reintroduced a custom which many of their parents' generation consider to be unnecessary for Bosnian Muslims.





## **Glossary**

The glossary contains non-English words that appear in the text, whether these are of Bosnian, Arabic or Turkish/Ottoman origin. It is based on the glossaries found in some of the literature I use, such as Malcolm (1996), Bringa (1995) and Roald (2004), and my own knowledge of the Bosnian language and Islamic terms. Most of the Islamic terms have the same pronunciation in Bosnian, but are then written with Bosnian letters (for example *hijab* – *hidžab*). The Turkish words are for the most part integrated into the Bosnian language.

*abaya*: a long coat worn by women on the Arabian Peninsula

*alahemanet*: Muslim greeting when leaving, from Ottoman time

*al-haya*: shyness, modesty

*al-mujahida*: a woman who is fighting for the Islamic cause

*al-salaf al-salih*: the three first Muslim generations

*beg*: lord or landowner

*beglerbeg*: the highest category of pasha, the *vizier* or governor of Bosnia

*bezistan*: cloth-market

*bida*: religious innovation, heresy

*bosanac*: Bosnian (male)

*bosanka*: Bosnian (female)

*bošnjak*: Bosniak (national name for male Bosnian of the Islamic faith)

*bošnjakinja*: Bosniak (national name for female Bosnian of the Islamic faith)

*bošnjaštvo*: “Bosnianism”

*burqa*: a piece of cloth that covers the whole woman (only a lattice in the fabric provides her with minimal eyesight). Women in Afghanistan were forced to wear this garment during the Taliban regime.

*chador*: a piece of cloth which hangs from the head and is draped around the body, worn by Iranian women

*Četnik*: member of the Second World War Serb resistance movement

*Dar al-harb*: the abode of war, area where the Islamic law doesn't apply

*Dar al-Islam*: the abode of Islam, area where the Islamic law applies

*dawa*: Islamic missionary work

*dobar dan*: good day

*do viđenja*: good bye

*džamija*: mosque

*fard*: obligatory, religious duty

*fatwa*: juridical declaration based on interpretation of Islamic law

*Federacija*: The Croat-Bosniak Federation

*fitna*: chaos linked to female sexuality

*hadith*: story about the prophet Muhammed, his *sunna* (tradition)

*hajaba*: to hide

*Hanbali*: the official school of law in Saudi-Arabia

*Hanafi*: one of the Sunni schools of law, the one followed by the Bosnian Muslims

*haram*: forbidden according to Islam, what is ritually impure

*hijab*: the female headscarf, original meaning: curtain

*hijra*: migration

*hodža*: imam

*ibadat*: the ritual duties

*ijtihad*: interpretation of the Islamic sources based on text and tradition

*jihad*: holy war

*jilbab*: a long coat with a hood, often embroidered

*Jurjevdan*: Orthodox celebration of spring and fertility on 6 May

*khimar*: a piece of cloth that covers a woman's head

*mahala*: residential area

*mahram*: any of a woman's male relatives

*marama*: headscarf

*medresa*: Islamic high school

*mekteb*: Islamic school for children

*merhaba*: welcome, common greeting in Ottoman time

*millet*: religious group, term for the non-Muslim groups in the Ottoman Empire

*Mladi Muslimani*: The Young Muslims, a lay Muslim organisation

*mufti*: Islamic scholar who can issue a *fatwa* (juridical declaration)

*mujahedin*: holy warrior, someone fighting for the Islamic cause

*musliman*: Muslim

*Musliman*: Muslim in the national sense, designation of Yugoslav communists

*nacija*: ethnic-religious community (nation)

*narod*: nation (*narodi* pl.)

*narodnost*: nationality

*niqab*: facial veil

*niya*: intention

*pasha*: general term for territorial governor

*pokrivene žene*: covered women

*preporod*: “rebirth”, Islamic newspaper

*Reis ul-ulementa*: Head of the Islamic scholars

*Republika Srpska*: The Serb Entity

*salafi*: a term employed for both Muslim modernist reformists, and a culturally defensive and anti-modernist Islamic movement

*Sandžak*: district (literally), and name of the border-area between Serbia and Montenegro

*shaikh al-Islam*: the highest religious authority in the Ottoman empire

*shalwar-khamis*: an outfit consisting of trousers, a long shirt that reaches down to the knees and a shawl which hangs loosely over the head or the shoulders (Pakistan’s national dress)

*sharia*: Islamic law

*sramota*: shame

*sunna*: the Prophet’s tradition, expressed in the *hadiths*

*šal*: shawl

*surah*: chapter in the Quran

*Ustaša*: Croatian Fascist movement from the Second World War

*takvim*: Islamic almanac

*tekija*: dervish lodge

*ulema*: Islamic scholars (*alim sg.*)

*umma*: Islamic community of the faithful

*vakuf*: religious-charitable foundation

*Vehabija*: Wahhabi, the official religious doctrine of Saudi Arabia

*vizier*: the highest rank of administrator in the Ottoman Empire

*Wahhabi*: the official religious doctrine of Saudi Arabia



## ***Abbreviations***

AIY: Active Islamic Youth

HSC: The High Saudi Committee for Assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina

IC: Islamic Community (*Islamska Zajednica, IZ*)

JNA: *Jugoslavenska narodna armija*, the Yugoslav national army

KPJ: *Komunistička partija Jugoslavije*, the Communist party of Yugoslavia,

LCY: League of Communists of Yugoslavia

NDH: *Nezavizimaja država Hrvatska*, the Independent state of Croatia

SDA: *Stranka demokratske akcije*, the Democratic action party



## Appendix: Informants

In the following I give a brief presentation of my informants. All informants are given pseudonyms, and information that might reveal their identities is left out. The information given is valid for the period of the fieldwork: fall 2005 and spring 2006. How many times I have interviewed different informants, length of interview and whether the interview was recorded, are also accounted for.

**Enisa** is in her mid-thirties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair at the age of 17. She works and is married, with children. Enisa is critical towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia, but is open for different ways of practising Islam. -One recorded interview, two hours.

**Emira** is in her late thirties. She does not wear *hijab* and considers it unnecessary for women in Europe. She has a job and is writing her Ph.D. She is married, with children. Emira is very critical towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -One recorded interview, one hour.

**Ajla** is in her mid-twenties. She does not wear *hijab* and considers it not to be obligatory for Muslim women anywhere. She is doing her Diploma at the University and working as a volunteer in a non-Muslim NGO. Ajla is very critical towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -Two interviews, partly recorded, and three more meetings.

**Nermina** is in her late thirties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair at the age of 19 when she was a student at the *medresa*. She works and is married, with children. Nermina is very critical towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -One recorded interview, two hours.

**Dženana** is in her mid-thirties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair after the war, when she returned to Sarajevo from her exile in a Western-European country. She works and is married, with children. Dženana is neither positive nor negative towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -One recorded interview, two hours.

**Nejra** is in her late thirties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair at the age of 18. She works at a non-Muslim NGO and is doing a Ph.D. She is married, with children. Nejra is critical towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -Two interviews, not recorded.

**Fadila** is in her late twenties. She does not cover her hair, but thinks it is obligatory and that she therefore should do it. Fadila is married and works. She has a University-degree. Fadila is neither negative nor positive towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -One recorded interview, two and a half hour.

**Raifa** is 18. She does not cover her hair, but considers it obligatory for all Muslim women. She is in her last year of High School. She is also undergoing religious education at a Muslim NGO. -One group interview, one and a half hour.

**Amila** is in her mid-twenties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair at the age of 18. She is studying at the University. She has undergone religious education at a Muslim NGO. -One group interview, one and a half hour.

**Elvira** is in her late thirties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair at the age of 33. She has studied for a period in a Muslim country and is now working. -One recorded interview, one hour.

**Selma** is 70 years old. She does not cover her hair, but considers it obligatory for all Muslim women. Selma is critical towards Wahhabi-influence. -One interview, thirty minutes, not recorded.

**Edina** is in her mid-twenties. She does not cover her hair. She studies the University. She neither expresses a critical nor a positive attitude towards Wahhabi-Islam. -Two informal interviews/conversations in a group-setting, not recorded.

**Jasmina** is in her late twenties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair at the age of 18. She has studied at the University for two years and is now considering her future plans. Jasmina is neither positive nor negative towards Wahhabi-influence. -One recorded interview, one hour and fifteen minutes.

**Meliha** is in her early thirties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair at the age of 16 when she was a student at the *medresa*. She works in a Muslim NGO and has undergone Islamic studies in an Arab country. She is married, with children. Meliha is quite critical



towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -Two recorded interviews, two hours and forty minutes.

**Lejla** is in her late twenties. She wears *hijab* and *niqab*, and started to cover her hair at the age of 15 and her face three years later when she was 18. She runs her own businesses and is married, with children. Lejla is not critical towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -One recorded interview, two hours.

**Medina** is in her early thirties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair at the age of 25. She has lived in a Western-European country and has a University-degree from a Muslim country. She is working voluntarily, giving lectures. She is married, with children. Medina is not critical towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -One group interview/conversation and one recorded interview lasting one and a half hour.

**Amra** is in her late twenties. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair at the age of 23. She has a University degree and is working. Amra is positive towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -One group interview/conversation, one interview, partly recorded (two hours), one informal interview and one more meeting.

**Azra** is 19 years old. She wears *hijab* and started to cover her hair when she was attending school in a Muslim country. She now studies at the University. She is positive towards Wahhabi-influence in Bosnia. -One informal group interview/conversation, not recorded.



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